"No Doubt a Consolation to His Dust:" Ecological Consciousness in Lord Byron's Works and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*

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Having studied the major works of the Romantic poet Lord Byron and contemporary children's literature author Philip Pullman, I have become familiar with their re-visions of the material world and their understanding of the human soul on its journey through that world. In my thesis, I put Pullman's and Byron's worlds in conversation with each other in order to access new insights about each author and their respective projects. The first part of my thesis resituates the Byronic hero in his[1] original environment, the material worlds which Byron writes. His heroes are self-exiled figures casting an ultra-critical eye on their society, while simultaneously looking inward at the faults of the self. I contend that Byron's poetic project is to create a new morality, which I call embodied morality, as distinct from that of his social milieu; one that seeks knowledge of the self and the soul in the natural world.

The second phase of my project explores the legacy of Byron's embodied morality in Philip Pullman's young adult fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials*. Published in the 1990s and early 2000s, Pullman's trilogy explores the possibility of multiple worlds, considers the human soul in the physical manifestation of a dæmon, and offers a revolutionary interpretation of the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. As a Romantic scholar, Pullman shares an organic ideological connection to the

[1] Throughout my thesis, I will use he/him/his pronouns in reference to the Byronic hero as all of Byron's heroes are gendered male in his texts. However, for an interesting analysis on a potential Byronic heroine, I suggest Gregory Olsen's article "Rewriting the Byronic Hero: 'I'll Try the Firmness of a Female Hand.'"

intellectual heritage born from the minds of Romantics such as Byron. However, scholars often ignore or dismiss the Byronic roots in Pullman's characters and his philosophy. Pullman's texts acknowledge Byron's work and, more importantly, expand upon his introduction to embodied morality. In *His Dark Materials,* Pullman deconstructs Christianity by reimagining the human soul and opening up the scope of life in a multiverse of equal worlds. The result is an ecological ethics meant to instruct citizens of Pullman's Republic of Heaven.

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Preface

I would like to extend a warm thank you to all of my peers, professors, and friends who encouraged my research and motivated me throughout the entire process. In addition, I would like to specifically thank my peers from Lit 3D, Austen and Brontë, and Senior Seminar for workshopping my ideas about Byron's works and Pullman's books. Finally, I want to share a very special note of appreciation for Dr. Amy Murray Twyning.

1.0 Mingling with the Universe: The Nature of Byronic Morality

"Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
"'Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge:
How little do we know that which we are!
How less what we may be! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
Our bubbles; as the old burst, new emerge,
Lash'd from the foam of ages; while the graves
Of Empires heave but like some passing waves"
~ *Don Juan*, Lord Byron[2]

1.1 Introduction

Lord George Gordon "mad, bad, and dangerous to know"[3] Byron spent his rather short life creating a public persona which has remained one of the most fascinating and radical celebrity personalities in England's history. Lord Byron is famous not only for his Romantic poetry, but also a scandalous series of affairs with men, women, and a half-sister, a dramatic and public divorce from his wife Annabella Milbanke, an ongoing struggle with depression, a physically deformed foot, and an aggressively individualistic attitude. His name and image are universally synonymous with rebellion and subversion. Byron scholar and editor of *Lord Byron: The Major Works* Jerome J. McGann argues that "since the time [of Byron's death] students of history and literature have often dated the Romantic Period 1789-1824, partly because the character of this

[2] Unless otherwise stated, all quotations of Byron's works are from Jerome J. McGann's edition of *Lord Byron: The Major Works.*
[3] This is a famous comment from Lady Caroline Lamb often quoted by Byron's contemporaries as well as Byron critics. Biographer Fiona MacCarthy explains in *Byron Life and Legend* that Lamb recorded this reflection on Byron's character in her diary after meeting him for the first time at a social gathering.

period was so determined by the epochal events in France, and partly because the career of Byron seemed at once its summary and its climax" ("Introduction" xi). The beginning of the nineteenth century in Western Europe was an environment of chaos, a breeding ground for legends. The Napoleonic Wars left Europe with several nations in utter destruction and widespread political unrest,[4] which manifested both within England and abroad in various philosophical disagreements. Furthermore, the new age of industry, capitalism, and general modernization was beginning to eclipse the age of aristocracy. Byron's poetry captures this volatile historical moment and repackages it for his audience with notes and explanations. On the surface, his writing appears chaotic; an "over-spilling abundance of mythological, political, philosophical, and intertextual refences," as Norbert Lennartz aptly describes it, sprinkled with semi-autobiographical musings on his life and his society (541). However, Byron's writing reflects a chaotic moment in time, summarizes it for readers, as McGann suggests, and redirects the madness into a manifesto for a revolution in morality. Instead of taking to the battlefield, Byron takes up his pen to write rebellion and change into reality.

The figurehead of Byron's revolution is his Byronic hero. In *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes*, Peter L. Thorslev engages in an analysis of the Byronic hero's origins which recognize the Byronic hero as a product not only of history, politics, and culture, but also of a rich literary tradition. As Thorslev suggests, Byron does not create his hero entirely from the fabric of his imagination; he does in fact beg, borrow, and steal from a long history of literature's notorious characters, including Milton's Satan of *Paradise Lost* (1667) and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1609). While it is true that "all the elements of the Byronic Hero existed before him in the

[4] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* features various descriptions of war-torn landscapes the hero encounters on his grand tour of Europe, based on Byron's own experiences as a young traveler in 1809 and as a divorcee in 1816.

literature of the age" and that he "did not spring by a miracle of parthenogenesis from Byron's mind," Thorslev argues, "this hero is unique, in one sense, in the powerful fusion of these disparate elements into a single commanding image" (12). Byron synthesizes the best and most notable elements from his fellow Romantics and dozens of writers who came before him to create his own hero.

Before elaborating on the role Byron's heroes play in his larger project, I must clarify my terms. I use the term "Byronic hero" to name the composite character of Byron's hero as he develops over the course of Byron's epics. I distinguish this from the wider circulation of the term "Byronic hero," which is a broader category that includes attributes of Byron himself and a lineage of dark, brooding, mysterious loners. This more general use of the term inscribes a larger category – in which Byron's actual characters have only a marginal place – and has been used to encompass any number of characters. Such nineteenth-century works as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897)[5] have been credited with Byronic heroes, for instance. Arguably, this is the result of the fascination with Byron's personal history. "[F]or every book on Byron's poetry there have been at least five on his life," Thorslev notes (4). In the shadow of his astonishing life and reputation, Byron's poetic project as a whole, garners relatively little scholarly attention, which in turn has tended to forestall critical investigation beyond the "Byronic hero." The essence of Byron's poetic project is to be found not just in an understanding of the Byronic hero but in the relationship between the Byronic hero and

[5] While these are mostly well-known examples, Fiona MacCarthy provides a detailed discussion of the Byronic hero's successors in a chapter from *Byron Life and Legend* entitled "The Byronic Englishman."

his environment. Nevertheless, I will briefly characterize the nature of the Byronic hero[6]. Byron and his hero share an intimate connection in the narrative space, but, as Thorslev maintains, "Byron is not his heroes, in spite of a hundred years of confusion of the two" (9). He certainly includes biographical moments in his texts[7], but his hero is a manifestation of Byron's revolutionary spirit mobilized in a grand and mythic environment. The Byronic hero is an outcast, a rebel, a wanderer, and a truth-seeker. In addition, he reconciles the reality of this identity while exploring the natural world.

In this first part of my thesis, I resituate the Byronic hero in his original environments, contending that the energy and impact of Byron's epic poems and plays exist in the drama that unfolds when the Byronic hero seeks sanctuary in the natural world and opens himself to the voice of the universe, to its song of chaos and beauty. Resonant as this is with a general Romantic sensibility, it is important to emphasize that the natural world is more than simply the ground or background of the hero's sojourn. Rather, the natural world is inspirited. If it is not quite correct to call the natural world "sentient" in Byron's cosmology, it is true that it has spiritual force that acts on the Byronic hero and invites him to "mingle with the Universe" (*Childe Harold* IV.1601). Each journey of the Byronic hero in Byron's major works builds a universe whose dimensions grow in each successive sketch from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18), *Manfred* (1816-7), *Cain* (1821), and *Don Juan* (1819-24). While exploring the natural spaces through which they wander, Byron's heroes find a wealth of experience and knowledge that dramatically shifts their

[6] Because the rest of this thesis does not address other characters who have been deemed Byronic heroes, such as the Victorian adaptations mentioned, and thus because there is no need to maintain a distinction between Byron's heroes and other "Byronic heroes," I will use the term Byronic hero to mean only those characters who were penned by Byron himself.

[7] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in particular is referred to as a semi-autobiographical text, though Byron weaves his memories, opinions, and concerns into each poem and play.

perception of the world. As a result, Byron's poetry is ultimately an experiment in revision: not just one revision but a series of revisions. Through the sublime knowledge discovered by his heroes, Byron rewrites the myths of human history several times over, seeking greater revelations of the truths of the human soul. I contend that his successive revisions of religious lore, political and philosophical ideologies, and cultural codes lead to new spiritual experiences. Byron's "mad, bad, and dangerous to know" reputation makes it easy to mistake his heroes' journeys for pursuits of personal and individualistic gratification, pursuits that are amoral at best and Satanically rebellious at worst[8]. However, as I have suggested above, Byron's philosophy insists on the unity between body and soul, physicality and spirituality, and so, what may be dismissed as Byron's immorality or amorality is actually what I will show to be his "embodied morality."

1.2 Rebelling Against "Thought's foes"

Part of Byron's overarching poetic project is to deconstruct and rewrite all the creeds of those he calls "Thoughts foes": the Church and the British state; the reigning moral codes they underwrite; and the fellow poets and public figures who speak for them (*Don Juan* IX.187). His poetry first and foremost is committed to the preservation of "Thought" and destruction of "Thought's foes." Throughout his life, Byron dealt extensively with the people whom he terms "Thought's foes;" authorities in his world who place arbitrary restrictions on knowledge and require individuals to meet certain conditions – wealth, social status, piety, submission – in order

[8] Perhaps, one might even suggest that Byron's lack of reputation for being a moral visionary is one of the reasons that his work is less canonical than the Romantics like Wordsworth who are more easily assimilable into a Christianity.

to gain even the limited supply of knowledge made available. As a young Whig in the House of Lords, Byron employed his wit and eloquence to disrupt these authorities in their superior climes.

Biographer Fiona MacCarthy chronicles the rebellious efforts of his early life in *Byron Life and Legend*. Specifically, Byron promoted different bills for support of English emancipation of practicing Catholics in Ireland and for more lenient treatment of English working-class protesters (MacCarthy 157, 155). However, his support for victims of England's domestic and foreign policies was both principled and deeply personal. Despite being born into the aristocracy, Byron as an individual is permanently and passionately at odds with his society. MacCarthy captures his struggle with England's heteronormativity: "England labelled as degenerate the instincts that Byron experienced as natural. The sense of his departure from accepted sexual mores increased his tendency to automatic opposition" (61). Though homosexual sex was illegal in England during Byron's lifetime, his close friends and relatives knew the truth of his bisexuality and, after his divorce from Annabella Milbanke, the rumor of his sexual relationships with men spread throughout England's elite circles. Similarly, the relationship with his half-sister Augusta Leigh purported rumors of incest, which were by all accounts quite accurate and all but proved Byron to be the father of her daughter Elizabeth Medora Leigh. Byron's bisexuality and his relationship with Augusta both contributed to his ultimate exile from England after his very public divorce in 1816. However, these events aligned him with other marginalized and outcast subjects: "After incest, after accusations of sodomy, his sense of himself as outlaw was now boundless…Byron's resentment at his own unjust banishment now made him more acutely sympathetic to any loss of freedom" (MacCarthy 284-5). Following the divorce episode and exile in 1816, Byron's gravitation toward rebellion increased exponentially into an explosive war between Byron and cultural authorities of the Western world; a war that is much bigger than even he could dream of

winning alone. He aligns himself with others who are outcast or oppressed and commits himself to breaking from all systems of oppression regardless of their origin[9]. By this point, he had published the first two Cantos of *Childe Harold* and had essentially become a celebrity in Europe. Furthermore, he had some experience writing the Byronic hero's exploration of the natural world. In his exile, he refines this theme and begins the essential work of visionary revision.

In his first work of satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809), Byron imagines "a keener weapon," a source of power that is mighty enough to topple his trinity of foes, the enemies of Thought who, in his imagination, restrict body and mind, pleasure and knowledge: Church, state, and society. A much clearer picture of Byron's ideological revolution emerges later in *Childe Harold*, *Manfred*, *Cain*, and *Don Juan* as his sketches grow fuller and more detailed, but the skeleton of his work is evident even this early in Byron's career; he writes: "Such is the force of Wit! But not belong / To me the arrows of satiric song; / The royal vices of our age demand / A keener weapon, and a mightier hand" (*English Bards* 17-20). In Byron's major works, he forges this weapon in the fires of myth and legend, rewriting tradition with a radical twist. Peter A. Schock highlights a theory in his article "'I Will War, at Least in Words': Byron and the Rhetoric of Opposition" proposed by Marilyn Butler that the younger Romantics tended to "'mythologize their disagreements with the Church and State'" (99). Byron certainly engages in this mythologizing in his writing, imagining his work as part of a cataclysmic battle between Olympians or Fallen Angels plummeting to earth where they must create new life. His poems are saturated with references to

[9] The image he cultivates for himself as liberator and revolutionary does indeed turn him toward activism – or "deeds" to use Byron's terminology – later in life when he resides in Italy and Greece where he aids revolution efforts. He donates money and other means of support, and eventually gives his life to the fight for Greek independence in Missolonghi, where he contracted the fever that killed him at age 36.

mythological figures like Prometheus, Athena, Achilles, and Venus as well as Biblical figures like Adam, Eve, Cain, Lucifer, and Noah. However, he goes beyond simply evoking the images of Prometheus or Cain in his work and instead rewrites both Biblical and Pagan myth into a new creed. For Byron, the Romantic reading of Milton's Satan, the first murderer, Cain, and the Greek mythological figure Prometheus in particular serve as excellent models of rebellion against omnipotent authorities. They foreshadow the Byronic hero's steadfastness in the face of hellish sorrow and his service to humanity in his defense of knowledge. Moreover, Byron translates their epithets devil, murderer, and fiend to the term *hero*, not as a matter of a misunderstood Byronic perversity but because he finds in these figures the fearless pursuit of truth and democratic rebellion. Byron's poesy is a destructive weapon and a creative tool. His revisions are firstly concerned with rebelling against authorities by deconstructing a culture rooted in hierarchical relationships meant to serve a select few. At the same time, he uses the familiarity of myth to rebuild new worlds where his heroes can be free.

Byron's moral truth emerges from the thunderous clash of ancient lore and Christian teaching. His first objective is to break from certain literary traditions, sifting through thousands of years of writers for inspiration – as well as enemies. As it so often happens with Byron, he begins this work with a challenge, a layered critique, and revolt, because "For men like Byron…rebellion against the social, political, and theological system [is] *imperative*" as Truman Guy Steffan argues in "An Apology for Revolt" (49; italics mine). There is no choice or second option. Rebellion is as essential to life as water or food or sleep. As a poet, Byron must first identify deceit and the restriction of knowledge in literature before extending his examination beyond the literary sphere. In the very first Canto of *Don Juan*, Byron writes a blatant and crafty set of new commandments undoubtedly meant to anger and provoke, but also to set new guidelines in place:

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;
Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey;
Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthey:
With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope,
And Campbell's Hippocrene is somewhat drouthy:
Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor
Commit – flirtation with the muse of Moore.

Thou shalt not covet Mr. Sotheby's Muse
His Pegasus, nor any thing that's his;
Thou salt not bear false witness like 'the Blues',
(There's one, at least, is very fond of this);
Thou shalt not write, in short, but what I choose:
This is true criticism, and you may kiss –
Exactly as you please, or not, the rod,
But if you don't, I'll lay it on, by G-d! (I.1633-48)

Byron launches his first attack in his ideological war against fellow Romantics, no doubt drawing attention to himself as he uses Christianity's holy commandments as a template for mockery and a chance to display his skill in satire. He dives headfirst into his invective, unraveling the authority those authors have in the cultural consciousness. He mentions poets by name to establish sides in the conflict: Milton and Pope as honest, Wordsworth and Coleridge as dishonest. We cannot visualize a battle unless we are aware of the opposing forces, opposing ideologies, and opposing goals. Albeit ironically, he claims the privilege and responsibility of revision in this moment by insisting that his contemporaries will "not write, in short, but what *I* choose" (*Don Juan* I.1645; italics mine). Though Byron calls upon allies such as Milton and Pope, he still denotes himself as different from even those he respects, eternally committed to solitude: "The consequence is, being of no party, / I shall offend all parties" (*Don Juan* IX.201-2). Unlike the youthful and eager member of the Devil's party[10], Byron in his thirties realizes the advantage of being of his own party. Though

[10] Diana Basham discusses Lady and Lord Byron and their daughter, Ada, in her text *The Trial of Woman: Feminism and the Occult Sciences in Victorian Literature and Society*. She writes that "Byron took his own daemonism seriously,

he can trust himself enough to speak the truth, he cannot always believe that others will not be tempted by deceit. McGann makes a note of this change as well in his analysis of Byron's retelling of the Cain and Abel myth from the Book of Genesis: "[*Cain*] represented neither the devil's party nor God's, for Byron had no intention (nor any inclination) to choose forms of worship with his poetic tales" ("Milton and Byron" 22). It is not that Byron exclusively worships Satan or that he disbelieves in God; rather, he believes that dominant mythologies have been purposefully misinterpreted throughout history and framed as ultimate truth.

1.3 Truth and Love Beyond Fiction

Byron's only true ally in his exploration of the universe is his Byronic hero. The hero rediscovers the spirit of the universe through his physical senses while on his journey, calling attention back to the world around us, instead of living life in the hopes of transcending into Heaven or in the fear of being relegated to Hell. In *Don Juan* Byron announces that "'Tis time that some new Prophet should appear, / Or old indulge man with second sight" (XV.717-18). His Byronic hero functions as this prophet and Byron uses his hero to chart the waters of ideological revolution. When the Byronic hero enters the literary space, he takes on his own life. After establishing the self as an outcast and being labeled as such by society, the hero must then undergo a pilgrimage to find a new space outside of the hero's native land which he can call home. Byron likens the process of exile to death; and in a sense, it is a social death that allows transformation to occur and opens the window to a new world. Such transformation is essential for the hero to

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and so did his contemporaries" (11). As a young man, Byron proudly professed his Satanism publicly and often, and while this does not necessarily disappear as he ages, his connection to Satan and demonism becomes more nuanced.

pursue paradise on earth, outside of Eden and outside of England. The hero searches for paradise in the natural world; in *Chide Harold* he explores war-torn landscapes in Europe and remnants of ancient civilizations; in *Manfred* he travels high into the mountains reaching toward the sky, away from the bustling world below; in *Cain* the play ends with the hero journeying into the wild, untouched plains of earth; and, in *Don Juan*, our hero travels across seas from Spain to England to Russia and more.

At the outset of the Byronic hero's journey, he seeks a means by which he can heal his grief; his discontent with the world and a social order that rejects all he has thought about love, religion, and the self. Each hero quickly finds, however, that he is not entirely alone in the natural world. The narrator of *Childe Harold* observes: "This is not solitude; 'tis but to hold / Converse with Nature's charms, and view her stores unroll'd" (II.224-5). It is this absence of fellow human beings which allows the hero to feel the presence of nature and hold conversation with it. Nature is a place of experience for the hero, a place to explore one's own soul while appreciating the soul of Nature. Byron evokes the familiar image of Mother Nature in *Childe Harold* to conceptualize the intimate relationship between his hero and the natural world; a relationship which quickly becomes reminiscent of what Christine Kenyon Jones terms "kinship" in her work "Byron, Darwin and Paley: Interrogating Natural Theology."[11] In *Childe Harold*, the hero connects emotionally with the flora and fauna which is the very antithesis of Western society's obsession with the artificial and the material:

> Dear Nature is the kindest mother still,
> Though always changing, in her aspect mild;
> From her bare bosom let me take my fill,
> Her never-wean'd, though not her favour'd child.

[11] Christine Kenyon Jones' article features an insightful comparison of Charles Darwin and Lord Byron in their arguments against Rev. William Paley. Both Darwin and Byron support equality between humans and non-human animals that Kenyon Jones terms "a sense of kinship" (189).

> Oh! she is fairest in her features wild,
> Where nothing polish'd dares pollute her path:
> To me by day or night she ever smil'd,
> Though I have mark'd her when none other hath,
> And sought her more and more, and lov'd her best in wrath. (II.325-33)

The image of Nature as ever-changing and wild reflects what the hero sees in himself; a soul that is wild, expansive. Civilization has starved him and rejected his desire. In Nature, he is not confined, but instead engages with a wildness akin to his own. The Byronic hero has no place in the domestic structure of society, much as Byron himself did not, and the strict guidelines it requires men and women to abide by in exchange for safety and acceptance. Often, Byron depicts an unhealthy relationship between the hero and his birth mother, using the mother as a symbol of this flawed domestic and heteronormative tradition[12]. For example, Don Juan is essentially disowned by his mother and sent away after he is seduced by a married woman, Donna Julia. On the journey from his home in Spain, he nearly dies in a shipwreck. Though the shipwreck is caused by the ocean's violent storms, it is his mother and the conservative domestic tradition she represents which put Juan in harm's way. Consequently, nature offers maternal care to the hero in his first moments of new life. There is familiarity in her wrathful, violent storms akin to the treatment from the birth mother, but there is also softness and beauty in her wildness. What is more, Juan's experience proves that there are randomized patterns to the universe that create a natural balance between the active and passive parts of Nature.

Furthermore, nature teaches of a love that is wild and mirrors the desires and ambitions of Byron and his heroes. In his new environment, the hero learns of a natural love that becomes a foundational principle of Byron's universe. Such unbound love is a gift from nature meant to

[12] It is important to note that Byron did not have a healthy relationship with his own mother nor his ex-wife and that undoubtedly impacted his portrayal of women.

liberate the soul so that it can mingle freely with other souls in a multitude of worlds. By connecting himself with the wildness of nature, the hero is able to accept his desires and practice love that is free from the codes set in place by a heteronormative society and the rules about sexual relationships enforced by the Church. For Byron, this wild, ever-changing love is often conceptualized through dramatically taboo love relationships, namely ones with hints of incest. Certainly, in *Cain* this is not quite as shocking because the audience is already aware of the Judeo-Christian interpretation of Cain and Adah as husband and wife; the wife whom Byron names Adah. However, these taboo themes are prevalent in *Manfred* as well, though perhaps more subtly. Manfred describes his deceased lover Astarte to the Witch of the Alps during his grieving process; he says: "She was like me in lineaments – her eyes, / Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone / Even of her voice, they said were like to mine" (*Manfred* II.ii.105-7). Manfred calls attention to their shared features, establishing both himself and his lover not necessarily as blood relations, but as children of the universe – of Byron's universe. As children of the natural world, Byronic heroes are able to pursue pleasure freely and without guilt or anxiety about the consequences of breaking with societal expectations. Again, Byron expands upon this form of free love in his final epic *Don Juan*. Following the shipwreck, Juan meets a young woman called Haideé, with whom he quickly falls in love. As Juan recovers from his injuries in a cave on the shore, Haideé makes regular visits to help him heal. In this intimate natural space, they are bonded not through the vows of Christian marriage, but by their shared awe of nature's beauty: "…the stars, their nuptial torches, shed / Beauty upon the beautiful thy lighted: / Ocean their witness, and the cave their bed, / By their own feelings hallow'd and united, / Their priest was Solitude, and they were wed: / And they were happy, for to their young eyes / Each was an angel, and earth paradise" (*Don Juan* II.1626-32). Nature offers up herself – in the stars, the ocean, the cave – to the young lovers providing them

with a safe and beautiful space to experience desire and pleasure. Haideé's relationship with Juan is a mutual exploration of paradise on earth, while Donna Julia's is predatory and manipulative. The notion that romantic connection through Nature is more honest than Church-sanctioned marriage is not new to *Don Juan*. Byron argues in *Childe Harold* that despite his hero being unwed to his youthful lover: "*That* love was pure, and, far above disguise" (III.490). Byron frequently suggests that there is corruption within the marital system; the ties between marriage and wealth. Specifically, he remarks on the impossibility of love in a social environment focused on wealth and status: "[Malthus'] book's the eleventh commandment, / Which says, 'thou shalt not marry,' unless *well*" (*Don Juan* XV.298-9). Byron knows that amongst humankind, he cannot find the kind of love described in his poems because his civilization is a heteronormative, class-stratified, and imperialist one where love cannot thrive. This truth is again derived from the inherited misinterpretation of human history. From the moment Adam and Eve are ashamed of their nakedness in mind and body, it is taught that pleasure derived from sexual experience and romantic connection is sinful unless practiced in a specific fashion: between men and women only; for the purpose of procreation only; within the marriage bed only; and so on. The natural world provides a beautiful space for intimacy between lovers where the individuals make their own guidelines. Only after such freedom can one recognize the material world as a paradise, both when it is wrathful and when it is beautiful.

1.4 Escape from Eden

In Byron's universe, his characters are able unflinchingly to pursue knowledge, pleasure, and a spirituality which does not recognize a hierarchy of beings. He makes this experience

accessible to readers by reframing Biblical lore; he reimagines what we are taught to be the exile of Adam and Eve as a potentially liberating journey to a new, unexplored, and beautiful world. Eden is not a paradise because it restricts those within its bounds presenting the Tree of Knowledge as within their sight but supposedly not within their reach. Cain remarks pointedly of the Tree of Knowledge in Byron's play *Cain*: "It was a lying tree – for we *know* nothing" (II.ii.161). Cain is angered by the unfairness of boundless knowledge being forbidden and, even after consuming the apple, still remaining out of their reach. Instead, *Cain* asserts that the true paradise is the world beyond Eden, which Adam and Eve turn to in exile. While his use of the Adam and Eve stories "remain[s] fairly traditional" as Wolf Z. Hirst argues in "Byron's Revisionary Struggle with the Bible,"[13] Byron applies a radical, Romantic lens to them in the same way he and Percy Shelley apply a Romantic lens to *Paradise Lost* by reading Satan as its hero. In *Don Juan*, there are frequent references to Adam and Eve that subvert the traditional readings of the Bible. In Canto I, Byron shares a rather crude and humorous introduction of Adam and Eve into the text: "Where our first parents never learn'd to kiss / Till they were exiled from their earlier bowers, / Where all was peace, and innocence, and bliss, / (I wonder how they got through the twelve hours)" (*Don Juan* I.139-42). Byron again unites mind and body by connecting sexual experience with knowledge that will nourish the brain.

For Byron, there is no existence of a blissful world without sexual indulgence, and he argues that the lack of sexual freedom for two individuals lounging intimately in the garden of Eden is precisely what makes such a myth illogical, and what makes God a sort of tyrant not unlike

[13] In his text, Hirst is speaking primarily about *Cain*, which does offer a very traditional, submissive image of Adam and Eve living for the sake of repentance. The focus is on Cain's individual rebellion against his passive, subservient relatives and the inheritance of his parents' sins. However, Hirst does go on to acknowledge *Don Juan* as the best example of subversion, and it is *Don Juan* which offerings the following images of Adam and Eve in my discussion.

the British society based on this foundational myth. It exposes the Church's use of Adam and Eve as self-serving in an attempt to control desire that may otherwise foster subversive tendencies – including but certainly not limited to homosexual sex, gender fluidity, sex before marriage, sex with more than one partner, and female desire[14]. Moreover, Byron compares the experiences of love directly to the so-called *fallen* figures in Pagan and Biblical mythology:

> But sweeter still than this, than these, than all,
> Is first and passionate love – it stands alone,
> Like Adam's recollection of his fall;
> The tree of knowledge has been pluck'd – all's known –
> And life yields nothing further to recall
> Worthy of this ambrosial sin, so shown,
> No doubt in fable, as the unforgiven
> Fire which Prometheus filch'd for us from heaven. (*Don Juan* I.1009-16)

In this moment, Byron compares the fall of Adam and of Prometheus to "first and passionate love." He is revising events Christian doctrine paints as negative, unchangeable follies to treat them as moments of awakening. In *Don Juan*, he proves that sexual experience privileges immense and wonderful knowledge reminiscent of Adam's delectable apple or Prometheus' burning fire, which Byron would have available in bushels and bonfires for all of humanity. Byron reclaims these creations of the natural world which should be available to all beings in the universe – not just the omnipotent beings, or the wealthy, white men, but to all spirits, humans, and non-human animals as well. Each subsequent reference to Adam and Eve functions in a similar fashion using two of the most famous literary figures as his weapon for breaking the shackles of theological doctrine.

The Adam and Eve that we see in *Don Juan* change significantly in *Cain*. In *Cain*, Byron argues that the true fall of Adam and Eve comes in the moments after their exile from Eden when

[14] Specifically, MacCarthy comments on Byron's attempt to depict female desire in *The Bride of Abydos* with his first heroine Zuleika: "He had wanted 'to preserve her purity without impairing the ardour of her attachment'" (212). Byron endeavored to create harmony between female sexuality and the expectation of purity placed upon women.

they surrender their knowledge and submit to God. When Lucifer visits Cain on Earth, Cain woefully describes this decline in his parents: "My father is / Tamed down; my mother has forgot the mind / Which made her thirst for knowledge at the risk / Of an eternal curse" (*Cain* I.i.179-81). Cain does not blame his parents for eating the apple – though he does wish they had eaten of the Tree of Life as well as the Tree of Knowledge. For Cain, God's injustice is to blame for placing knowledge and eternal life within their reach only to prohibit their possession of such gifts. Instead, the true fall of Adam and Eve is their rejection of true human potential. Cain believes Adam, in his subservience to God, has relinquished the ability to use the knowledge from the tree to better know his human soul. Similarly, Eve's folly is that she stopped thirsting for knowledge and truth. She lets God dictate what is true instead of her own mind. Byron's critique of Adam and Eve serves as an analogue to the forgetfulness of his contemporaries. Through Adam and Eve in *Cain*, Byron is commenting on the history of English society, suggesting that it is founded on an original surrender of knowledge and a subordination to cultural authorities to tell them what is true and what is to be believed. Cain, however, encourages readers to ask questions, to challenge people in power. He interrogates God, Lucifer, and his family members trusting only his own intelligence to parse through the information he finds. Such curiosity is essential to Byron's vision of the soul; it gathers the instincts of the individual to a point of questioning a questing that forces open closed doors. Byron encourages readers to be curious and to break the artificial barriers to greater knowledge.

These sketches of human potential encourage individuals to revise their own inherited perspectives on the world in the same way the Byronic hero does – through challenge and exploration. Nature provides a new home that is beautiful and wild and teaches the hero what life and love can look like when liberated from the hold of theological and social systems. The world

changes the hero, but the hero also changes his world. In *Don Juan*, Byron expands upon the significance of Nature even further, naming it the locus of spiritual experience for his hero: "My altars are the mountains and the ocean, / Earth, air, stars – all that springs from the great Whole, / Who hath produced, and will receive the soul" (III.926-8). In this moment, Nature is given the role of creator, not one God or multiple gods and goddesses, but the natural universe which creates and reabsorbs life after death. Nature is more than just a pseudo-mother figure; it is a beautiful, wild reminder that the material world is the only world; our soul remains here forever. Therefore, in Byron, one can learn how to experience their environment in such a way that their own individual spiritual truth becomes accessible. By engaging with the world around them, the world that made them and the world they are made of, one can find a creed, a code, or a lifestyle that fits their own needs as an individual in a massive and variable universe. Cain is an excellent example of how such work is done. Though Byron does not directly proclaim Nature as the location of experience until writing *Don Juan* at the end of his career, he also writes it into the subtext of *Cain*; which is undoubtedly the closest Byron comes to rewriting the Bible itself[15]. Act II follows Cain and Lucifer as they travel through the cosmos so that Cain may come to understand life and death. Cain's journey eventually inspires his stand against God, and Abel as God's emissary on Earth. However, in the moment, Cain's awe-inspired speeches leave the audience similarly breathless:

> O, thou beautiful
> And unimaginable ether! and
> Ye multiplying masses of increased
> And still-increasing lights! what are ye? what
> Is this blue wilderness of interminable
> Air, where ye roll along, as I have seen
> The leaves along the limpid streams of Eden?
> Is your course measured for ye? Or do ye

[15] In the Preface to *Cain*, Byron writes: "The author has endeavoured to preserve the language adapted to his characters; and where it is (and this is but rarely) taken from actual *Scripture*, he has made as little alteration, even of words, as the rhythm would permit" (*Lord Byron: The Major Works* 881).

> Sweep on in your unbounded revelry
> Through an aerial universe of endless
> Expansion, at which my soul aches to think,
> Intoxicated with eternity?
> Oh God! Oh Gods! Or whatsoe'er ye are!
> How beautiful ye are! how beautiful
> Your works, or accidents, or whatsoe'er
> They may be! Let me die, as atoms die,
> (If that they die) or know ye in your might
> And knowledge! My thoughts are not in this hour
> Unworthy what I see, though my dust is;
> Spirit! Let me expire, or see them nearer. (*Cain* II.98-116).

In this speech, Byron allows us to gaze through Cain's eyes using rich imagery as a telescopic lens through time. His descriptions of "masses of…lights," the "blue wilderness," and "an aerial universe of endless / Expansion" allow readers to visualize the vast and colorful swirl of lights that constitute our universe. Its beauty is breathtaking, but it is also frightening. He reports that his "soul aches" at the sight of eternity in its flow. The vastness of the universe provides feelings of awe and dread when compared to the self. Byron takes us through Cain's thought process, his interrogation, and his revision of past beliefs. He desires to know what these lights are – what they are made of or whom they are made of – and "is [their] course measured?" or are they free to roam about wherever they choose. As someone who lives directly beside the garden of Eden where he is forbidden to enter, the freedom to choose what spaces he occupies and what he does in those spaces is itself revolutionary. He goes on to revise his own spiritual understanding as well, proclaiming "Oh God! Oh Gods! Or whatsoe'er ye are!" reassigning the power of God to the stars, planets, and life forces around him. They are equal in beauty as in power. Finally, he asks Lucifer to let him die so that the very atoms which make up his being may go and mingle with the atoms he is watching flow freely and gracefully in space. Cain even goes so far as to question whether or not atoms even *die* at all. Though he does not necessarily find an answer to this question, he is

willing to explore the implications of death; to be the one who brings death and all its nuances into his world.

Moving forward from the dawn of human experience, we arrive in the Alps with another of Byron's heroes: Manfred. Much like Cain, Manfred turns to nature in grief for answers and, like Don Juan, he finds it to be a space of spiritual haven. In *Manfred*, Byron's hero learns from nature on his treks through the mountains in solitude as he is grieving over the death of his lover, Astarte. He blames himself for her death. While speaking with the Witch of the Alps, he describes his treasured moments with nature before the onset of grief:

> My joy was in the Wilderness, to breathe
> The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
> Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing
> Flit o'er the herbless granite; or to plunge
> Into the torrent, and to roll along
> On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave
> Of river stream, or ocean, in their flow.
> In these my early strength exulted; or
> To follow through the night the moving moon,
> The stars and their development; or catch
> The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;
> …
> – and with my knowledge grew
> The thirst of knowledge, and the power and joy
> Of this most bright intelligence, until – (*Manfred* II.ii.62-72 & 94-6)

Manfred describes at length the moments of nature's power and beauty he witnesses in the mountains; the harsh landscape that no bird or insect can bear, the mighty waves crashing below, or the strikes of lightening blinding to his eyes. On this particular mountaintop altar, Manfred finds answers to his questions about life and death, but also ultimate relief in the realization that this world is the ultimate destination of the soul. It is only when he is stricken by grief that he loses sight of this beauty, knowing that he must face Astarte again in this world and confront his guilt.

While seeking oblivion to escape the pains of loss, he instead finds reason to question what he is told to be true. In the final act, he argues against the spirits' mythologies about death:

> I do not combat against death, but thee
> And thy surrounding angels; my past power
> Was purchased by no compact with thy crew,
> But by superior science – penance – daring –
> And length of watching – strength of mind – and skill
> In knowledge of our fathers – when the earth
> Saw men and spirits walking side by side,
> And gave ye no supremacy. (*Manfred* III.iv.112-19)

Byron uses his hero to disprove the mythologies about the final judgement and the existence of Heaven and Hell. He continues to deconstruct the theological doctrine that has created a culture of anxiety, limitation, and ignorance. When concerns about the next life are proved unnecessary, it privileges a new perspective about the present world; life becomes about experience, action, and desire. Byron constructs a spirituality where the soul remains part of the universe which bore it, even after it transcends corporeal form. Manfred does not fear death. In fact, his final words in the play confirm this truth as he admits, "'tis not so difficult to die" (*Manfred* III.iv.151). Death becomes a simple transition once the anxiety about the destiny of the soul is eliminated.

Priya N. Kissoon and Paul Simpson-Housley discuss the significance of mountains in *Manfred* as well in "The Evaluative and Spiritual Dimensions of Mountains in 'Manfred.'" In their analysis, "the Alps were a place where [Byron's] instinctual love of physical activity and adventure, his conscious appreciation of their majesty and solitude, and his subconscious need to transcend the harsh petty life below and lose his consciousness in the bliss of nature's heaven, could wrestle amongst themselves for dominance" (Kissoon & Simpson-Housley 92). The mountains certainly offer the chance for the Byronic hero to reconcile emotions associated with his concerns about life and death. However, their analysis is limited to considering Byron's writing exclusively within the confines of Christian belief; they refer to the mountains as "an intermediate

purgatory between a miserable earthly existence for the misanthropist and unknown higher forces" (Kissoon & Simpson-Housley 93). Manfred originally seeks death as penance for sending Astarte's soul to a faraway place he cannot access. However, by the end of the text, Manfred has rejected this notion. Heaven, Hell and Purgatory no longer exist. In fact, the spirits he speaks to are no longer considered by Manfred to be superior beings because Manfred has dismantled their fictitious hierarchy. Manfred's memory is extended beyond the normal limitations of humankind because in nature he learns of a time "when the earth / Saw men and spirits walking side by side" (*Manfred* III.iv.117-8). He remembers a time when there was no artificial hierarchy of beings in the universe. Moreover, he recognizes the slow progress of humanity's realization of this fact, a realization which requires "length of watching – strength of mind – and skill / In knowledge of our fathers" (*Manfred* III.iv.116-7). The mountains are undoubtedly a location of evaluation and spirituality as Kissoon and Simpson-Housley suggest, but they are not an intermediate purgatory. They cannot be a purgatory because, as Manfred professes, such realms do not exist. The mountains are an altar, as Byron terms them, and the hero is one with them in the universe.

Childe Harold is one of the best examples of Byron's hero becoming one with the natural world. The entire story of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* follows our hero as he travels through Europe and its natural splendors. Childe Harold, as the first Byronic hero, is our guide and our introduction to embodied morality. According to Byron, the instinct to challenge has remained dormant in humanity and in poetry for hundreds of years, appearing infrequently only to be snuffed out again. In the Cantos of *Childe Harold*, the flame is reignited: "…there is a fire / And motion of the soul which will not dwell / In its own narrow being, but aspire / Beyond the fitting medium of desire; / And, but once kindled quenchless evermore, / Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire / Of aught but rest; a fever at the core, / Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore" (III.371-8).

Byron here describes the burning and dangerous power of desire, the need for adventure, and resistance to rest in youth. But he also observes the "motion of the soul which will not dwell / In its own narrow being" (III.372-3). Childe Harold acknowledges the gradual pull of the soul, confined within our physical body in life, to reunite with the universe it is born from. Throughout our entire life while we experience passion, desire, grief, adventure, any endless string of emotions, and the soul within our "narrow being" is all the while guiding us back to communion with the animate matter of the natural world where it will reside after the death of our body. By the end of *Childe Harold*, our hero is rather suddenly pronounced dead, as though the natural world he has been exploring resorbed him into its beauty leaving only its magnificent glory to be seen. Byron demonstrates this beautifully in the final moments of *Childe Harold*, after our hero is professed dead:

> There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
> There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
> There is a society, where none intrudes,
> By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
> I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
> From these our interviews, in which I steal
> From all I may be, or have been before,
> To mingle with the Universe, and feel
> What I can ne'er express, yet can not all conceal (IV.1594-1602)

Childe Harold does not hate his fellow human beings – though he does not belong in their society. Civilization is but a waypoint on the soul's journey through the universe. Childe Harold's decision to leave what is familiar is primarily a sacrifice. He offers up all of himself, what he has been and may become, to the universe in order to find understanding there. Childe Harold, and Byron in his own way, leave us while they "mingle with the Universe" through spirit and through language respectively. Even early in the text while Childe Harold is still alive, the narrator remarks: "Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part / Of me and of my soul, as I of them?" (*Childe Harold*

III.707-8). Byron again elevates the connection between individual and nature as one of kinship. Not only are mountains, waves, and skies altars where knowledge and truth can be accessed, but they are also part of the self because it all is produced from "the great Whole" : Nature (*Don Juan* III.927). The beauty and magic of Nature allow for emotions and pleasure unimaginable to be accessible through the senses. Childe Harold sacrifices himself in corporeal form to guide Byron's exploration of earthly paradise. He is a symbol of hope, proof that the natural paradise exists and is accessible to humankind. *Childe Harold* bursts through the artificially declared and policed barrier between the material world and the animate self, and Byron ushers the hero out of the falsely constructed world he left behind and into our world, the world of the future.

In one of the frequent and introspective tangents of *Don Juan*, Byron questions the purpose of writing and publishing. At first, he nonchalantly suggests that it is simply a pastime meant to excite a dull existence. However, he ends the stanza with a subtle moment of hope: "And what I write I cast upon the stream, / To swim or sink – I have at least my dream" (*Don Juan* XIV.87-8). Whether it is false modesty or a rare moment of self-doubt, Byron here admits that all he can do as a poet is to share his ideas with the world and hope that it catches the current. He provides readers with a revised perspective of human existence moving into the nineteenth century that many authors explored and adapted themselves. Byron undoubtedly faced certain limitations which perhaps prevented him from finding solutions to the problems he calls attention to in his writing. He died suddenly of a fever at thirty-six leaving *Don Juan* unfinished and many other works unwritten. He also dedicated the last few years of his life to the movement for Greek Independence, which put much of his writing on hold. Furthermore, his struggles with depression, his exile from England, and relatively unique ideology left him perhaps too pessimistic to imagine a world without suffering and without a need for revolution. However, his poetry provides some

answers. It encourages us to turn toward Nature for truth and to acknowledge ourselves as part of the natural world. In *Byron Life and Legend*, MacCarthy hypothesizes that "if [Byron] lived ten years longer he foresaw that he would startle the world with something that 'like the cosmogony, or creation of the world, will puzzle the philosophers of all ages'" (324). However, Byron's potential is not terminated by his death. His death does perhaps mark the end of Romanticism as McGann suggests, but it also marks the release of his potential into the material world to "mingle with the Universe" (*Childe Harold* IV.1601).

2.0 Ecological Ethics and the Precarity of Eden

"…And world by world,
And star by star, and universe by universe
Shall tremble in the balance, till the great
Conflict shall cease, if ever it shall cease,
Which it ne'er shall, till he or I be quench'd!"
~ *Cain*, Lord Byron

"The first ghost to leave the world of the dead was Roger. He took a step forward, and turned to look back at Lyra and laughed in surprise as he found himself turning into the night, the starlight, the air…and then he was gone, leaving behind such a vivid little burst of happiness that Will was reminded of the bubbles in a glass of champagne"
~ *The Amber Spyglass*, Philip Pullman

2.1 Introduction

Contemporary novelist and Romantic scholar Philip Pullman, like Lord Byron, is no stranger to literary and philosophical controversy. His young adult fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials* was both criticized and banned in academic spaces due to its treatment of Christianity. The three novels – *The Golden Compass* (1995)[16], *The Subtle Knife* (1997), and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000)[17] – include a scathing representation of institutionalized religion, a successful revolution against Heaven and its angels, and the death of God, who exists in Pullman's world under the pseudonym the Authority. In his 2002 Arbuthnot Honor Lecture, Pullman straightforwardly explains his treatment of God and Christianity: "…I cannot believe in the God

[16] The UK edition of the novel is titled *Northern Lights* instead of *The Golden Compass*.
[17] Throughout the rest of the paper, I will refer to Pullmans novels in my citations as *TGC*, *TSK*, and *TAS* respectively.

who is described by churches and in holy books. So I'm conscious of God only as an absence, but an absence which is full of echoes, troubling echoes and unhappy ones, consoling ones and kindly ones, chastening ones and wise ones" (39). Pullman brings Christian theology to life in the physical world – God, angels, and even sin, take physical form, albeit forms not always visible to the naked eye. What is more, the trilogy explores the dire environmental consequences of human ignorance and blind faith in a God they accept as all-powerful and otherworldly. As Bernard Schweizer argues in his article "'And He's A-Going to Destroy Him': Religious Subversion in Pullman's *His Dark Materials*," Pullmans characters "act on the belief that God is not a champion of mankind but rather its enemy, since He is opposed on principle to what is beautiful, enlightened and pleasurable in life" (164). In other words, Pullman, and thus his characters, reject God's authority not only because he's "a fraud and a liar" but because the Republic of Heaven cannot co-exist with God (Schweizer 165). For Pullman, God and Christianity embody the opposite of enlightened truth. It is not simply enough to consider God as absence, he must be dead too.

Nevertheless, the series has been widely successful despite, and sometimes because of[18], its controversy and has inspired readers for over twenty-five years with its imaginative majesty. While Byron's embodied morality is still very much focused on the development of the individual soul in and through experience with the natural world, Philip Pullman's trilogy articulates what I call an "ecological ethics," which, as I will show, shifts the emphasis to the preservation of the material world as both the stuff of the human soul or consciousness and the animate life of the universe.

[18] Bernard Schweizer also analyzes this trend of anti-theism associated with Pullman's trilogy and calls attention to Christopher Hitchens' love of *His Dark Materials* precisely because it supports his anti-theistic beliefs.

Millicent Lenz, editor of *His Dark Materials Illuminated: Critical Essay on Philip Pullman's Trilogy*, claims that "Pullman has created a cross-age trilogy with the power to move people at the deepest level, the potential to change their consciousness, and even (admitting the boldness of my claim) the possibility to transform themselves and the world they inhabit" (1). What Lenz cites here is encapsulated in Pullman's conception of the Republic of Heaven. Like Byron, Pullman is no respecter of Christian doctrine. Many critics have examined Pullman's intertextual engagement with *Paradise Lost*, which is, of course, the source of the trilogy's title[19]. Many critics read Pullman's use of *Paradise Lost* as aligned with William Blake's famous claim that Milton "was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it" ("The Marriage of Heaven and Hell"). However, few have noted the place of Byron's work in Pullman's imaginarium. Though Byron is indeed a Romantic poet, the existing scholarship on the Romantic roots of Pullman's *His Dark Materials* primarily examines the connection between his work and that of William Blake[20]; specifically, the Blakean reading of Milton. However, Byron's successive sketches of different worlds function as a layered world building which points to his influence on Pullman's own multiverse where worlds are stacked against each other. The series is a complex investigation of ontological concern and cosmological lore written with a Romantic lens in mind and set in a fantastical multiverse meant to serve the purpose of such literary experimentation.

There are rich intertextualities, or hidden windows, connecting the worlds of Lord Byron to the worlds of Pullman. Let us then, begin at the point of connection between Byron's universe and Pullman's multiverse: the Aurora Borealis. The phenomenon of the Aurora, the Northern

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[19] "…Into this wild abyss / (The womb of Nature and perhaps her grave) / Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire, / But all these in their pregnant causes mixed / Confus'dly, and which thus must ever fight / Unless th' Almighty Maker them ordain / His dark materials to create more worlds" (Milton Book II lines 910-16).

[20] For an analysis of Pullman and Blake see Carole Scott's article "Pullman's Enigmatic Ontology: Revamping Old Traditions in *His Dark Materials*."

Lights that lend their name to the UK title of *The Golden Compass*, is the ideal example of Nature as animate matter in the writing of both authors. In *The Golden Compass*, the Aurora grows ever closer as the story pulls both characters and readers to the northernmost locations on Earth: "Above and ahead of them the Aurora was blazing, with more brilliance and grandeur than [Lyra] had ever seen. It was all around, or nearly, and they were nearly part of it. Great wings beating; cascades of luminescent glory tumbled down invisible crags to lie in swirling pools or hang like vast waterfalls" (300). Lord Byron, though he did not travel to the North himself, was fascinated by the Aurora Borealis and expressed specific interest in the research of Arctic explorer William Edward Parry[21]. Byron considers the North West Passage and the Aurora often in his literature; notably in the latter Cantos of his final, unfinished poem *Don Juan*. He writes:

> But after all they are a North-West Passage
> Unto the glowing India of the soul;
> And as the good ships sent upon that message
> Have not exactly ascertained the Pole
> (Though Parry's efforts look a lucky presage)
> Thus gentlemen may run upon a shoal;
> For if the Pole's not open, but all frost,
> (A chance still) 'tis a voyage or vessel lost. (XIII.305-12)

In this passage Byron parallels a search for the unknown North West Passage to a journey to discover the soul. Byron rejects the capitalist and imperialist endeavor to discover the North West Passage. Instead, he likens exploration in the Poles to an internal journey toward selfhood. India, the planned destination of the North West Passage comes to represent the soul. Exploration opens a passage for spiritual and intellectual growth. Byron and Pullman are searching for a more fully formed image of not only the soul, but the soul's journey through the physical universe; from

[21] For a study of Byron's connection to William Edward Parry (1790-1855) see Ralph Lloyd-Jones' article "Parry's Polarities: Lord Byron and William Edward Parry, Arctic Explorer." Also, note that Pullman's own Arctic explorer is named John Parry, and his son Will Parry.

existence within a corporeal being to a new, lesser-known phase of existence. The North and the Aurora Borealis serve their mission well. The vast blanket of snow and ice, though mysterious, is untraversed by humankind and as the northernmost point of the globe it is therefore closer to the sky and cosmos. It is an ideal image for conceptualizing physical as well as spiritual journey. The Aurora, "luminescent" and "glowing", baptizes the North in colorful waves of liminality (*TGC* 300 and *Don Juan* XIII.306). The lights linger between the visible and invisible, between reality and unreality, in the same way that the human soul does. Furthermore, Byron here considers the possibility that the Pole is open. Pullman takes such suggestive imagery from Byron and literally bursts the Pole wide open for his readers. John Parry discovers the open window in the North of our world[22] to Cittàgazze and Lord Asriel forcibly creates a massive bridge into Cittàgazze from Lyra's home world. Both actions prompt readers for exploration of the infinite universe.

In this section, I will argue that Lord Byron's and Philip Pullman's texts inform each other's experimentation with ecological practice. By putting their works in conversation with one another we gain access to a new, diverse perspective on each work. Lord Byron and Philip Pullman both engage in a revision of cosmological lore to discuss ontological and epistemological problems. Byron begins his revision in the early nineteenth century. He demonstrates the potential of embodied morality in his epic poems and plays. Pullman's trilogy works through the same revisionary framework, but it also directs our attention to a more precise objective than of Byron's work: the construction of the Republic of Heaven. Byron is not simply rewriting the Bible or Pagan mythological tradition in his poetry and neither is Pullman. Both writers are collating a cultural history of the Western imagination and examining how that history, from the creation of humanity

[22] Pullman tells readers at the beginning of *The Subtle Knife* that Will and John Parry are from our own world.

to their own present moment, has been misdirected or falsified. The Book of Genesis, the story of humanity's origin and its various subplots and retellings, are founded on a misinterpretation of Eve's actions and reinforced by centuries of deceit. While our attention is directed to the apple, to the serpent, to the supposed fall of Adam and Eve, in the periphery there are furtive weeds taking root in the Garden and in our world's consciousness – the narrative of a hierarchy among living beings, the notion of knowledge as dangerous, the limitations on individuality, the definition of what it means to be Human, the existence of Heaven and Hell, etc. In the absence of God, these weeds become a malignant infestation. Byron and Pullman uproot these readings from our consciousness, and they replant a revised cosmology in their place. However, Philip Pullman does more than adopt Byron's philosophy. *His Dark Materials* effectively expands the reach and depth of Byron's embodied morality to construct an ecological ethics.

2.2 The Dæmons of Genesis

In *Don Juan*, Lord Byron rewrites several scenes from the Bible and in his revision encourages readers to question the authenticity of The Book of Genesis in particular. Pullman likewise revises Christian lore throughout *His Dark Materials* including the Bible and, most notably, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Burton Hatlen remarks on Pullman's work with Milton's mythology in his essay "Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, a Challenge to the Fantasies of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, with an Epilogue on Pullman's Neo-Romantic Reading of *Paradise Lost*." Hatlen observes that, "daringly, Milton begins his poem not with God or man but with Satan. So too, at the very beginning of Pullman's trilogy, we meet his 'Satan,' Lord Asriel" (87). Lord Asriel is a formidable mixture of the Blakean Satan figure and the Byronic hero. He and his snow leopard

dæmon Stelmaria are a fiercely defiant pair who are determined to rebel against the Magisterium's authority through exploration, experimentation, and eventually warfare. Pullman introduces Asriel in the first chapter of *The Golden Compass* and we come to understand his nature even before we have fully come to know our protagonist Lyra:

> Lord Asriel was a tall man with powerful shoulders, a fierce dark face, and eyes that seemed to flash and glitter with savage laughter. It was a face to be dominated by, or to fight: never a face to patronize or pity. All his movements were large and perfectly balanced, like those of a wild animal, and when he appeared in a room like this, he seemed a wild animal held in a cage too small for it (*TGC* 13)

The Retiring Room at Jordan College is a patriarchal space women and children are forbidden to enter and where male scholars discuss the politics of a seemingly distant world. Even though the scholars reserve rights to academic freedom, the space is ultimately controlled by the Magisterium's influence. While in this room, Asriel is compared to a caged animal. He is a trespasser in the room as much as Lyra; an enemy of the status quo and an adversary of the Authority. Asriel, like the Byronic hero, finds his power in his connection to the wildness of Nature. His fierce and savage countenance are an external display of his internal contempt for authorities in the world. Hatlen supports this reading of Asriel in his essay; he writes: "From the beginning Asriel has a distinctly Byronic aura of injured merit and defiance in the face of his enemies – and this Byronic role, historically, owes much to Milton's Satan" (87). As Hatlen aptly states, Asriel's blatant challenge against the Magisterium and the Authority parallels Satan's own revolt against God in *Paradise Lost*. Satan and Asriel will stop at nothing to bring down the theocratic tyrants in their own worlds.

Pullman revises Genesis specifically at the end of *The Golden Compass* when Lyra is speaking with Lord Asriel, her father, about Dust. Pullman rewrites the fall of Adam and Eve, which is read aloud to Lyra by Asriel:

> "*And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:*
> *"For God doth know that in the day ye eat therof, then your eyes shall be opened, and your dæmons shall assume their true forms, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil…*
> *"But when the man and the woman knew their own dæmons, they knew that a great change had come upon them, for until that moment it had seemed that they were at one with all the creatures of the earth and air, and there was no difference between them*
> *"And they saw the difference, and they knew good and evil; and they were ashamed"* (*TGC* 372)

The Biblical text is altered to include dæmons – "an aspect of your self which has a physical existence outside you, in the form of an animal" – to align with the reality of Lyra's world (*Dæmon Voices* 26). According to the Serpent, eating of the Tree of Life will make Adam and Eve as gods. The apple grants them a special knowledge; the ability to distinguish between good and evil. What is more, Adam's and Eve's dæmons assume their true form and allow them to better know themselves. As we learn earlier in *The Golden Compass*, "'…when your dæmon settles, you'll know the sort of person you are'" (167). Therefore, by forbidding the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, the Authority prohibits any intimate knowledge of the self. The Authority and the Magisterium cannot co-exist alongside human self-consciousness. Their operation requires control over the human soul obtained through misinformation and manipulation. Consequently, the Authority, and by extension the Magisterium, preaches of Eve's consumption as the coming of original sin and the shameful fall of humanity. Pullman adjusts this Biblical scene to raise questions about the purpose behind framing the story in a negative context. By introducing dæmons, he reframes the Tree's knowledge as an organic knowledge of selfhood that is necessary for existence instead of a powerful, mysterious brand of knowledge perceived as dangerous.

Pullman's world is perfectly imagined as a world akin to our own, but far enough removed from our reality that we can carefully and thoughtfully use Lyra's world to question our own world in the way that Byron does. Namely, the Consistorial Court of Discipline and its various branches

parallel various institutions in our own world. Asriel informs Lyra that this governmental and religious body teaches that Dust is "the physical evidence for original sin" (*TGC* 371). Lyra is deeply puzzled by this information and by the passage from Genesis that her father reads. Lyra's reaction establishes her as an investigator of truth in her world. Her response to Asriel is that "it en't *true*, is it? Not true like chemistry or engineering, not that kind of true? There wasn't *really* an Adam and Eve?" (*TGC* 372). Lyra here distinguishes between an empirical, attainable truth associated with science, and an artificial knowledge represented as truth by the Consistorial Court. Byron and Pullman are experts at detecting similar authority figures and organizations in their real worlds, and then representing them in their fictional ones. Byron refers to these individuals as "Thought's foes" in his epic *Don Juan* as their mission is to control knowledge and prevent individual exploration of thought (IX.187). Pullman's examination is more specific, more direct.

In a lecture reprinted in *Dæmon Voices*, Pullman investigates the structure of organizations in his world, which are reflected in the image of the Consistorial Court of Lyra's world:

> Theocratic absolutism has been around for longer than theory, and its effects have been far more deadly. But first I'll have to clarify what I mean by theocratic, because I don't think you need to believe in God to have a theocracy; some theocracies are atheist…So when I say 'theocracy' in the context of what I'm saying tonight, I'm not limiting the term to those states that base their authority on the existence of a supernatural creator. What I'm talking about is the tendency of human beings to gather power to themselves in the name of something that may not be questioned, and to justify what they do in terms of absolutes: absolute truth; absolute goodness; absolute evil; absolute hatred; if you're not with us, you're against us (379-381)

Pullman creates the Magisterium as a comprehensive example of the theocratic absolutism defined here. Though his fictional religious institution does have a supernatural Authority, his critique in the books is primarily directed at the human members of the Magisterium who use the power of God to experiment on economically disenfranchised children, censor academic study, teach children to be ashamed of their bodies, perpetuate gender and racial inequity, and so on.

Furthermore, the Magisterium understands humanity as either absolute good – submissive, shameful, reverent – or absolute evil – rebellious, prideful, sinful. Later, Pullman goes on to describe the opposite of theocratic absolutism, which he calls the school of morals:

> To sum up the argument then, between what I've called the school of morals, and theocratic absolutism: that latter tendency in cultural life says that meanings are fixed and simple and determined by authority; whereas the school of morals sees them as ambiguous, complex, subject to development, and arrived at by experience and by imaginative sympathy (*Dæmon Voices* 389)

In other words, theocratic absolutism sets humanity on a course of obedience, sin, repentance, and death which can only lead to a life of numbness and misery. On the other hand, the school of morals teaches people to actively read the ambiguities in their world to construct meanings for themselves which become personal truths. Nature, as Byron also demonstrates, is meant to be read. More importantly, it is meant to be read subjectively and to vary from individual to individual, from community to community.

In Lyra's world, the Consistorial Court presents their reading of the Bible as empirical fact rather than a subjective interpretation of a text. The Consistorial Court's teachings about the Bible and subsequent historical events are presented as the only "authorized" interpretations and any other interpretation is viewed as "heretical" (*TGC* 274). Our protagonist, Lyra, immediately notices the inconsistency in Christian teaching and primes readers to critically analyze the fiction of the Magisterium. Asriel furthers Pullman's critique of Christianity in his answer to Lyra's question about Adam and Eve where he instructs her to "think of Adam and Eve like an imaginary number, like the square root of minus one: you can never see any concrete proof that it exists, but if you include it in your equations, you can calculate all manner of things that couldn't be imagined without it" (*Golden Compass* 372-3). Asriel's mathematical metaphor directly speaks to Lyra's own empirical thought process. In his estimation, organizations such as the Consistorial Court –

and more broadly the Magisterium – treat their opinion as absolute fact and create an entire cosmology around their opinions. History, culture, politics, and all other human-made creations are influenced by these theocratic absolutes.

Lyra has a grounded understanding of theoretical scholarship; the study of chemistry, engineering and the like. However, she pushes against the cultural rule that science should prove religious doctrine, which her father introduces in the aforementioned passage[23]. Lyra recognizes the Magisterium's Biblical lore for what it is: bad storytelling. Lyra, our beloved liar and adventurer, is a masterful storyteller. She dazzles characters and readers alike with her wild, imaginative stories of her life. However, even early on in *The Golden Compass*, the stories – or lies – that she tells are grounded by her truth in her real world. A notable example is when she tells the gyptian children about her father's attempted murder. In her retelling, a Turkish Ambassador attempts to kill her father and ends up drinking the poison himself as a result of Asriel's cunning (*TGC* 130-1). While her account is embellished and key details are altered, the story is about a real political and adult event she witnesses in the Retiring Room. Her father was almost poisoned, and he did cover it up with cleverness. Lyra demonstrates an essential process by which human beings read their world and recreate it through oral and written storytelling. Furthermore, Pullman's trilogy treats Genesis as a story according to the methodology of the school of morals. The characters each read the story differently: for the Magisterium it is a story of disobedience and sin; for Asriel and his followers it is a story of rebellion and forbidden knowledge; for the mulefa it is a story of beauty and evolution. Pullman even rewrites his own interpretation of the text with Will and Lyra which foregrounds experience and love. According to Pullman, each of these stories are

[23] Notably though, Asriel's war against the Authority is not what brings about the end of his reign. It is simply another battle of absolutes and authorities who believe they know what is best. Conversely, the mercy of Lyra and Will is what ultimately frees the Authority and therefore paves a way forward.

truths because they represent personal experience of the world. There is no one, authorized truth in the Republic of Heaven.

2.3 Our Ecological Materials

In the UK edition of *The Amber Spyglass*, Pullman begins each chapter with an epigraph drawing upon a variety of authors. When Lyra arrives in the Land of the Dead, her journey nears its ultimate climax as she prepares to finally reunite and reconcile with her friend Roger. However, she cannot reach the Land of the Dead without leaving her dæmon Pantalaimon behind in an intensely painful moment of betrayal. Pullman precedes these moments with a quotation from one of Lord Byron's letters to his publisher John Murray in 1817: "I hate things all fiction…there should always be some foundation of fact" (*TAS* 291). Throughout all of his works from *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* to *Don Juan*, Byron maintains a commitment to the kind of truth Lyra promotes in her discussion with Asriel. Byron's poems and play are his own readings and retellings of his world; sometimes embellished, but always based in his reality. Byron scholar Jerome J. McGann examines truth in Byron's poetry in his article "Byron and 'The Truth in Masquerade.'" McGann writes: "…for the goal of [*Don Juan*], like all of Byron's work, is neither absolution nor reconciliation, it is simply – profoundly – knowledge itself: not absolute knowledge or ultimate Truth which Byron regards as illusions, but knowledge as a living commitment to truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" ("Byron and 'The Truth in Masquerade'" 18). Interestingly, McGann adopts similar language to Pullman in his analysis of *Don Juan*. McGann asserts that

Byron rejects absolutes as mere illusions that serve theocracy and threaten knowledge,[24] which Pullman discusses extensively in *Dæmon Voices*. Byron also seeks to dismantle the illusion of an absolute, authorized truth. In his poems, he does write fiction, but his fiction rewrites the traditional treatment of knowledge and truth. Pullman's fantasy works in the same way. After a childhood of embellished, wild storytelling, Lyra learns in the final book, *The Amber Spyglass*, that there are consequences for stories that are all fiction. On the shore of the Land of the Dead, Lyra and Will encounter its guardians, the harpies. These harpies demand Lyra tell them a story and she quickly falls into her habitual pattern of exaggerated storytelling; but this time, the story she shares is not based on her life and her own experiences. The harpies sense her deceit and attack her, leaving a deep gash on her forehead; a mark of Cain. In a process of trial and error, Lyra quickly learns that the unembellished version of her journey to the Land of the Dead is more valuable. In the Land of the Dead, where ghosts roam and life slowly withers away, the story of one's life, one's actions are what matters most. Storytelling in this newly encountered world is much more powerful than Lyra had previously imagined because stories are products of both physical and spiritual experience. As Lyra tells the souls in the Land of the Dead about her memories of Earth, the harpies listen and their leader, No-Name, explains the significance of Lyra's words:

> "Because it was true" said No-Name. "Because she spoke the truth. Because it was nourishing. Because it was feeding us. Because we couldn't help it. Because it was true. Because we had no idea that there was anything but wickedness. Because it brought us news of the world and the sun and the wind and the rain. Because it was true." (*TAS* 332-3)

Lyra revives the souls in the Land of the Dead and befriends the harpies by sharing rich, sensory memories from life in the real worlds. The harpies are struck by, *nourished* by this rich truth. The

[24] In my analysis, when I use the term theocracy in regard to Byron, I am employing Pullman's definition of the word which includes institutions that are religious, atheist, or anything in between.

ghosts are reinvigorated by it. Lyra not only learns this lesson, but she is able to apply it to her situation and free all of the souls from the Land of the Dead as a result. She creates a pact between humanity and the harpies, who agree that in exchange for true stories of human life they will lead the souls out of the Land of the Dead. However, they are adamant that the stories must be truthful recollections of a person's life if they wish for guidance through the Land of the Dead: "'If they live in the world, they *should* see and touch and hear and love and learn things" (*TAS* 334). Pullman stresses the value of experience here in a traditionally Byronic fashion. In his essay "The Republic of Heaven," Pullman echoes this sentiment insisting that humans must "see this real world, our world, as a place of infinite delight, so intensely beautiful and intoxicating that if we saw it clearly then we would want nothing more, ever" (664). The recognition that the physical world is their true home is what will ultimately lead humanity back to it.

Long before Lyra learns how to create the best kinds of stories, however, she learns how to read her world against the traditions taught under the Magisterium. Specifically, she begins un-learning the misinformation that has shrouded human sight for thousands of years. In *The Golden Compass* Lyra meets the exiled king of the Svalbard bears, Iorek Byrnison who teaches her that "you could never trick a bear. We see tricks and deceit as plain as arms and legs. We can see in a way humans have forgotten. But you know about this; you can understand the symbol reader" (226). Iorek introduces a new layer to Pullman's exploration of truth. In this moment, Iorek suggests that human beings once had a special sort of ecological vision[25] which allowed for them to see deceit plainly. Humans have since lost this ability to detect falsehood, allowing theocratic absolutism to govern humanity's vision and memory. Pullman does not explicitly share when or how humans lost ecological vision, only that it has been long forgotten, or perhaps dormant.

[25] I will refer to this ability as ecological vision throughout the remainder of the paper.

However, he does introduce a bear who *is* capable of being deceived: Iofur Raknison. Iofur's lust for power and glory, his double-dealings with the Magisterium and Lord Asriel, and his desire for an artificial dæmon all compromise his intellectual power. When Lyra meets Iofur, she detects "a kind of humanness in [his face] which she had never seen in Iorek's" (*TGC* 336). As Iorek informs Lyra, Iofur naturally possess the ability to guide the Svalbard bears according to the truths of the universe. Instead, he turns to the Magisterium and submits to falsehood in exchange for artificial power. His actions are revealed in his countenance as a display of falsehood. Iofur's folly is that he rejects a gift naturally bestowed upon him by Nature – the ability to see deceit plainly – and instead pursues human-made power. Therefore, Pullman uses Iofur's fall to suggest that human beings lost their own sight by similar means. A preoccupation with power leaves human beings vulnerable to deceit, distanced from knowledge, and obsessed with the artificial world instead of the natural one.

Fortunately, though human beings have forgotten how to visibly identify deceit, Pullman also argues that ecological vision can be regained. In fact, as Iorek states, Pullman has equipped Lyra with humanity's forgotten power by giving her the instinctive skill required to use the alethiometer[26] or "symbol reader" (*TGC* 226). At the conclusion of the series Lyra, like all her fellow human beings, returns to the state of forgetfulness that Iorek first tells her about in *The Golden Compass*. After reaching puberty, she can no longer read the alethiometer to her great dismay. The angel Xaphania explains that Lyra "read it by *grace*…and [she] can regain it by *work*" (*TAS* 520; italics mine). Pullman grants young Lyra the innate ability to read the alethiometer so that she can detect truth as a harpy or an armored bear. Lyra gains knowledge about her world and

[26] Notably, the panserbjørne, witches, and shamans can all engage in similar readings of their world without the aid of the alethiometer.

all the other worlds when she reads the alethiometer. After Lyra learns all that she *must*, she unknowingly relinquishes her gift. However, the alethiometer privileges information Lyra can use to build a foundation for the Republic of Heaven, where all people, including Lyra, can work throughout their lives to regain the ability to see truth naturally.

Pullman and Byron both introduce materials and methods for communicating with the universe in their texts. Pullman begins with the alethiometer – a device used to communicate with the Dust in the universe and for seeing beyond the doctrinal realities imposed on the world. In *The Golden Compass*, Pullman suggests that the symbol reader is powered by Nature: "At once the needle began to swing round, back, round and on further, like a bee dancing its message to the hive" (204). At other times, Lyra remarks that the alethiometer reminders her of a human, or some "intelligent being" (*TGC* 147). For Pullman, the alethiometer unites intellect with instinct and reconnects body and soul[27]. While reading the alethiometer, Lyra becomes part of a metaphorical hive mind. She connects herself to Nature, thinks and communicates like Nature, and is rewarded with the information that she seeks as a result. Each time she reads the alethiometer, the experience becomes more defined. Lyra explains the process first to Farder Coram: "I kind of see [the meanings]. Or feel 'em rather, like climbing down a ladder at night, you put your foot down and there's another rung. Well, I put my mind down and there's another meaning, and I kind of sense what it is. Then I put 'em all together. There's a trick in it like focusing your eyes" (*TGC* 151). Again, Pullman draws our attention to the sense of sight. Lyra describes reading the alethiometer as a union between the eyes, the mind, and the body. The process intertwines vision, intellect, and

[27] The panserbjørne are another example of this ideal that Pullman is elevating in the text. A unity between the instinctive, animal parts of a person and the learned, intellectual parts of a person.

sensation and the reader can then intuit truth from what is seen, what is known, and what is felt. It is a sort of meditative state which grants a special dream-like vision of the interconnected, ambiguous relationships between everything which makes up Pullman's multiverse. Much like the myriad of worlds Pullman imagines, the meanings attached to the alethiometer's symbols are distinct, but always nearly grazing one another. At the end of *The Golden Compass*, Lord Asriel tells Lyra that "'Dust is what makes the alethiometer work'" (370). Though she suspected as much, the revelation unlocks another level of meaning in Pullman's trilogy much like Lyra unlocks levels of meaning when reading the alethiometer. People in Lyra's world are terrified of Dust, the physical evidence of original sin. However, after witnessing the violence and selfishness of both her parents, Lyra realizes that perhaps Dust is *good* and becomes determined to find it herself to protect it (*TGC* 398). Instead of believing what the adults tell her, her experience and her clear-eyed appraisal of the fallibility of adults teaches her to trust her gut feeling about Dust. Moreover, she has the ability to directly communicate with Dust through the alethiometer. By reading the alethiometer, Lyra creates knowledge and reality through interpretation. A triadic link emerges between Lyra, the alethiometer, and Dust. It is a relationship of equal parties, which bestows organic wisdom upon Lyra. However, the alethiometer never predicts the future for Lyra. Instead, it provides her with hidden information about the past and shares information about present events. The meanings must be created by Lyra.

The process by which persons communicate with the universe is later expanded in *The Subtle Knife* with the introduction of Dr. Mary Malone: a scientist from Will's world who studies Dark Matter, also known as Dust. As a scientist, Mary satisfies Lyra's curiosities about the universe. More importantly though, Mary discovers a wealth of information about Dust. Like Lyra, Mary has her own materials for communicating with Dust. First, at the behest of Lyra, Mary

customizes her computer so that she can directly speak to Dust by typing on her computer screen. Through this method, Mary Malone learns her destiny is intertwined with that of Lyra and Will. In a thrilling, suspenseful scene, the Dust particles name themselves angels and inform her that she "must play the serpent" (*TSK* 250). Thus, Mary Malone's journey to other worlds in search of her ambiguous destiny begins. Mary's computer program serves as proof that methods for communicating with Dust can and continue to be invented. Second, Mary uses the I Ching – a method for alethiometer-like readings involving sticks which originated in China – to guide her on her journey to aid Lyra and Will after leaving her world. Mary's reading of the I Ching matches the creative skill of Lyra reading the alethiometer. In fact, the product of Mary's reading in *The Amber Spyglass* is a poetic story in its own right:

> *Turning to the summit*
> *For provision of nourishment*
> *Brings good fortune.*
> *Spying about with sharp eyes*
> *Like a tiger with insatiable craving* (84)

The reading again demonstrates the creative, active process of reading Nature through various means. Pullman's world revolves around the process of storytelling in all its forms. Notably, the I Ching, which Mary hangs in her office as decoration, has existed for thousands of years alluding to the timeline of human consciousness Pullman constructs throughout the trilogy. The alethiometer, the I Ching, the subtle knife, and the skulls which have be trepanned all date the origin of human self-awareness and consciousness to about 30,000 years before the start of the trilogy. Dust pours over each of these devices precisely because they are a result of human invention. Furthermore, it proves that other human beings in Will's world have been able to communicate with Dust before Lyra arrives.

Mary's interactions with Dust reach their climax when she arrives in the world of curious beings called mulefa. The mulefa have a parallel history to the beings in Lyra's world and Will's world. Dust – or *sraf* in their language – is attracted to the mulefa's consciousness as well. Similarly, the mulefa inform Mary that they have existed for 30,000 years placing consciousness on the same timeline in at least four worlds – Lyra's world, Will's and Mary's world, the mulefa's world, and Cittàgazze. While living with the mulefa, Mary creates the amber spyglass in an attempt to see Dust and study it. Pullman writes:

> If she'd been in the Jordan College Retiring Room when Lord Asriel had projected the photograms he'd made with the special emulsion, she would have recognized the effect. Everywhere she looked she could see gold, just as Atal had described it: sparkles of light, floating and drifting and sometimes moving in a current of purpose. Among it all was the world she could see with the naked eye, the grass, the river, the trees; but wherever she saw a conscious being, one of the mulefa, the light was thicker and more full of movement. It didn't obscure their shape in any way; if anything it made them clearer.
> *I didn't know it was beautiful*, Mary said to Atal (*TAS* 243)

For readers and for Mary, it is the first time Dust is made truly visible. Mary's spyglass brings new meaning to Pullman's notion of ecological vision. The conscious particles are intertwined with the essence of human self-awareness and intellect. She sees them moving with purpose toward conscious beings; attracted to sentient matter like itself. Mary's experiment once again unites vision and intellect and as she remarks it is utterly beautiful.

Mary Malone's experimentation with poetry via the I Ching and her reverence for Nature's beauty align her with the Romantics in general and Lord Byron in particular. Byron does not employ the I Ching, a spyglass, or a computer program[28] to speak to the natural world. However, Byron communicates with Nature through verse. The Romantic tradition of poetry writing in particular aligns with Pullman's notion of ecological vision. The majority of Romantics, Byron

[28] Interestingly, Lord Byron's daughter Ada Lovelace did invent the first computer.

included, use poetry as a means of uniting their visions of the natural world and the feelings which those visions create in written word[29]. For example, in *Manfred*, Byron describes a mental and physical state akin to Pullman's description of Lyra reading the alethiometer or Mary gazing through the amber spyglass:

> The stars are forth, the moon above the tops
> Of the snow-shining mountains. – Beautiful!
> I linger yet with Nature, for the night
> Hath been to me a more familiar face
> Than that of man; and in her starry shade
> Of dim and solitary loveliness,
> I learn'd the language of another world. (III.iv.1-7)

In this moment, Manfred soliloquizes his desire to remain in the mountaintops with what is most familiar to him: Nature. Manfred recognizes himself more among the snow-capped mountains than he is able among his peers below[30]. Interestingly, Manfred imagines that he is able to learn "the language of another world" (*Manfred* III.iv.7). Byron's language calls to mind Pullman's multiverse which unites multiple worlds, namely through the materials which help the characters to communicate with Nature. Like Lyra, Manfred turns his gaze upward, northward and his reverence for the mountains and night-time sky afford him a similar vision of the natural world. In addition, Manfred is struck by the beauty of Nature as Mary Malone is and sees a familiar face in the natural world in the same way that Mary sees the Dust which comprises all beings in Pullmans multiverse.

Byron's various sketches, his revisions based on his own world, are creations not unlike the stories that Lyra shares in Pullman's books. Byron sends forth his Byronic hero who, not unlike a witch's dæmon, is free to travel great distances from their human counterpart, into different

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[29] William Blake, whom Pullman draws upon often, specifically presents the visual and written together in his engravings of *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* published in 1789.
[30] In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron writes "I love not Man the less, but Nature more" (IV.1598)

worlds to explore and discover; and, like a dæmon, the Byronic hero always remains tethered to Byron himself. However, Will is perhaps the most authentically Byronic of all Pullman's characters. Pullman undoubtedly writes Lord Asriel with "a distinctly Byronic aura" as Hatlen notes, but Asriel represents a trajectory of literary evolution which owes itself more to Milton's Satan than the Byronic hero. Conversely, Will Parry is a true adaptation of the Byronic hero; specifically, of Byron's metaphysical rebel Manfred.

In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, Byron writes, "The royal vices of our age demand / A keener weapon, and a mightier hand" (19-20). For Byron, his early work of satire, his metaphysical plays, and his epic poems act as that weapon battling the vices of his own age. Later, Pullman manifests that "keener weapon" and renames it the subtle knife. A weapon with unimaginable power, the subtle knife is able to cut through any material and can cut windows into other worlds. In *The Subtle Knife*, Will earns the right to wield the weapon after losing a finger. Lyra observes Will as he learns to use the subtle knife and is surprised by what she finds: "Lyra imagined she could see Will's soul flowing back along the blade to his hand, and up his arm to his heart" (*TSK* 184). When Will uses the subtle knife, it becomes one with his body. He uses his soul to locate the veil between worlds and cut it. This action is similar to the act of writing. Unlike Lyra who favors oral storytelling practices, Will, like Byron, engages in a different kind of creation. As he opens the windows to other worlds, he creates infinite possibilities for what they can discover when they explore those worlds[31]. Then, as Lyra demonstrates in the Land of the Dead, those experiences will naturally translate into stories in different forms. When Byron writes his hero into a new world, he engages in that same practice. He records the experiences of each different hero

[31] It is, of course, important to note that the subtle knife is a very dangerous tool and Will and Lyra later learn in *The Amber Spyglass* that each time the knife is used a Spectre is created; a being that feeds on consciousness in the universe.

– Childe Harold, Manfred, Cain, Don Juan – and those moments become stories, based in fact and molded by fiction.

At the end of *The Subtle Knife*, Will visits the mountaintops in an unfamiliar world in a scene that is strikingly similar to Byron's *Manfred*. He has recently learned to use the subtle knife, escaped another brush with death with Lyra by his side, and his hand continues to ache with infection. Most importantly, however, Will is concerned for his mother whom he had to leave behind in his world. As each Byronic hero before him, Will turns to the natural world for a solitary place to consider these feelings:

> He felt as if he should walk all night, all day, forever, because nothing else would calm this fever in his breast. And as if in sympathy with him, a wind was rising. There were no leaves to stir in this wilderness, but the air buffeted his body and made his hair stream away from his face; it was wild outside him and wild within…he came out on a little plateau almost at the top of the world, it seemed. All around him, on every horizon, the mountains reached no higher (*TSK* 316)

The act of wandering through the mountains helps to settle the restlessness in his heart. Manfred expresses the same contentment while among the mountains, that Nature is "a more familiar face / Than that of man" (*Manfred* III.iv.4-5). Manfred wanders through the natural world in search of oblivion as a means to escape the grief and guilt over the death of his lover. Ultimately, Manfred learns not to fear death and confronts the ghost of Astarte. Similarly, Will finds that the winds among the mountaintops mirror the wildness within himself. He is guilty about abandoning his mother, but also acknowledges his own exhilaration while exploring and wandering. Furthermore, Will finally meets his father, John Parry, while among the mountains. During their conversation, Will is compelled to confront part of himself he is unprepared to accept: "'…you're a warrior. That's what you are. Argue with anything else, but don't argue with your own nature.' Will knew that the man was speaking the truth. But it wasn't a welcome truth. It was heavy and painful" (*TSK* 320). Will does not want to fight, especially as a solider in Lord Asriel's rebellion against the

Authority. However, it is a vital part of his nature to protect those that he loves: he cares for his mother while she struggles with mental illness; he fights beside Lyra and Pan whom he has come to love and respect. Will is a protector to those he loves, and in that respect is also a warrior. Among the mountains, he is able to accept this as his own truth.

2.4 God Lies and God Dies

In Byron's *Cain*, Lucifer insists in a conversation with Cain that "[He has] a victor – true; but no superior" (II.ii.429). God was able to defeat Lucifer and his fellow fallen angels, but the latter maintains that God is not inherently superior because of his victory. *Cain* subtly guides our attention to the deceit at the heart of Christian lore. Byron encourages his readers to unpack the possibilities which arise as a result of Lucifer's declaration. *His Dark Materials* is a direct result of Pullman's own dismantling of Biblical lore and the history provided by Christian churches. Pullman rewrites an unfiltered story which goes beyond removing God's title of Superior, and in fact labels him as a liar. Schweizer asserts that Pullman "chips away at the very basis of Christian doctrine. In his fictive world, religion is mass deception; God is a grizzled, tottering liar; his prince-regent a kind of devil; and the servants of the Church as corrupt as they are tyrannical" (160). Schweizer's analysis perfectly captures the effect of Pullman's "antitheistic rebellion" (161). However, Pullman himself maintains that *His Dark Materials* is a work of realism. His world may be fictitious, but his portrayal of God, Church officials, and religion in general is based in a real-world analysis. Pullman exposes the lies of the Authority to slowly unravel the threads of fiction woven into Western consciousness.

It is not humans who reveal threads of fiction to readers, but the reclusive witches – namely Ruta Skadi and Serafina Pekkala – and the ancient angels Balthamos and Baruch. The truth comes from a direct source, from beings who have the means to communicate with the universe and whose longevity privileges memory of the long distant past. In *The Amber Spyglass*, the angels guarding Will share their history with him while they search for Lyra in the mountains:

> "The Authority, God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty – those were all names he gave himself. He was never the creator. He was an angel like ourselves – the first angel, true, the most powerful, but he was formed of Dust as we are, and Dust is only a name for what happens when matter begins to understand itself…He told those who came after him that he had created them, but it was a lie. One of those who came later was wiser than he was, and she found out the truth, so he banished her" (33-34)

Balthamos' startling revelations confirm that religions, religious institutions, Biblical texts, and all their implications have all been based on falsehood perpetuated by God himself. God in all his variations is an imaginary number like Adam and Eve, as Asriel suggests. Furthermore, Balthamos asserts that angels, like human beings, are made from Dust. Carole Scott analyses the treatment of Dust and its Romantic origins in her article "Pullman's Enigmatic Ontology: Revamping Old Traditions in *His Dark Materials*." Specifically, Scott refers to the Biblical use of dust: "In the King James Bible, 'dust' is the word God uses to describe the essence of humankind: 'for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return'" (100). In other words, the Biblical 'dust' has an almost negative connotation and is used to distinguish between the lesser human beings on Earth and the greater angels in Heaven. However, Balthamos' story disturbs the hierarchy of sentient matter in the universe. According to Balthamos, all self-conscious beings are made of Dust – God, angels, witches, armored bears, humans and so on. That is not to say that each sentient being is the same. Iorek suggests that human beings have forgotten an essential part of themselves which renders deceit visible. Humans have allowed themselves to become victims of Gods theocratic regime.

What is more, humans are divided in their beliefs. The Magisterium and its various branches enforce the Authority's laws blindly, while others like Lyra and her friends adopt varying degrees of resistance.

The Authority's artificial hierarchy is opportunistic and amoral certainly, but it is another, more nefarious lie which earns him the title of tyrant. Even more disturbing than his claiming the title Creator is the truth that Heaven is a lie. According to Balthamos and Baruch, there is no Heaven only a Land of the Dead: "'It is a prison camp,' said Balthamos. 'The Authority established it in the early ages'…'Even the churches don't know; they tell their believers that they'll live in Heaven, but that's a lie. If people really knew…'" (*TAS* 35). There is no Heaven or Hell, only the Land of the Dead where all human beings are imprisoned for eternity. Moreover, as Lyra and Will learn when they travel to the Land of the Dead, dæmons cannot live there. Each human being is eternally separated from a part of their soul. Lyra becomes acquainted with the horrors of the Land of the Dead through her beloved friend Roger. In *The Golden Compass,* Asriel sacrifices Roger to open a bridge between Lyra's world and Cittàgazze. Lyra's anguish and guilt bleeds forth from the pages as she realizes she has led her best friend to his death so soon after rescuing him from the Magisterium. In *The Amber Spyglass,* while Lyra is in a drugged sleep, she speaks to Roger from the living world: "He said, 'It's the world of the dead, Lyra – I dunno what to do – I dunno if I'm here for ever, and I dunno if I done bad things or what, because I tried to be good, but I hate it, I'm scared of it all, I hate it'" (*TAS* 10). In this moment, even before Balthamos and Baruch reveal the truth about Heaven, Roger's fear and confusion push readers to a place of discomfort about religion. Roger's concern about being good echoes centuries of human concern about avoiding the wrath of God by doing good and rejecting evil.

His Dark Materials deconstructs the archaic binary of good and evil. The myth of Heaven and Hell and the deliberate deceit of the Authority at the very least proves the binary of good and evil a false method of judging character. Pullman instead transfers the labels good and evil to actions rather than individuals. In his 2002 Arbuthnot Honor Lecture, he explains that "the people I most value – and consequently the people my stories esteem most highly – are those who *do good things*, no matter what they believe or don't believe, no matter what they feel. It's better to have hatred in your heart and yet do something good, than to have a heart overflowing with love, and do nothing" (39). Pullman demonstrates his theory in *The Amber Spyglass* in a stunning reversal of Christian lore in which the father (and mother) – Lord Asriel and Marisa Coulter – sacrifice themselves for their child – Lyra. Marisa's final moments are a moving reflection on Pullman's principles: "'I wanted [Metatron] to find no good in me, and he didn't. There is none. But I love Lyra. Where did all this love come from? I don't know; it came to me like a thief in the night, and now I love her so much my heart is bursting with it'" (*TAS* 427). Both Asriel and Marisa have done evil and perhaps even remain untrustworthy characters until their very end, but they do the right thing. They accept an eternity of oblivion so that their daughter can be safe and free. Furthermore, it is her "monstrous crimes" which mask Marisa's good-hearted intentions from Metatron and allow for Lyra to succeed in her own mission to free the souls from the Land of the Dead (*TAS* 427). Instead of allowing the good versus evil binary to dictate human interaction, Pullman draws attention to our actions and how they prove that "we're connected in a moral way to one another, to other human beings. We have responsibilities to them, and they to us" ("The Republic of Heaven" 664). In other words, a person's actions – whether good, evil, or something in between – make them answerable to their community, not to an omnipotent authority who promises certain rewards, which are never delivered, in exchange for worship.

Consequently, Pullman is quite interested in revising the Christian notions of the afterlife that are tied up in the concerns of good and evil precisely because these conceptions of afterlife breed anti-ecological practice. Pullman regards eternal life as a punishment; one he does not even enforce upon his tyrant, the Authority: "So my heresy is to suggest that eternal life is not a reward, but the most cruel punishment, imposed on us by God for the sin of seeking to grow up and become wise" (*Dæmon Voices* 34). Instead of eternal half-life, Pullman believes that the body and soul should reunite with the world which made them – to return to particles of Dust. The Land of the Dead is an artificial world, a place where both good and evil deeds are rewarded with eternal anguish. It cannot be destroyed but is instead transformed through selfless sacrifice. Lyra and Will are Pullman's ultimate representation of good deeds in action. Though they make mistakes, they have no true malice in their hearts; only curiosity, strength, and love. In a moment of innocence and ignorance, they release God, the Authority, from his own sort of prison:

> The shaking hand seized [Will's] and feebly held on. The old one was uttering a wordless groaning whimper that went on and on, and grinding his teeth, and compulsively plucking at himself with his free hand; but as Lyra reached in too to help him out, he tried to smile, and to bow, and his ancient eyes deep in their wrinkles blinked at her with innocent wonder.
>
> Between them they helped the ancient of days out of his crystal cell; it wasn't hard, for he was as light as paper, and he would have followed them anywhere, having no will of his own, and responding to simple kindness like a flower to the sun. But in the open air there was nothing to stop the wind from damaging him, and to their dismay his form began to loosen and dissolve. Only a few moments later he had vanished completely, and their last impression was of those eyes, blinking in wonder, and a sigh of the most profound and exhausted relief. (*TAS* 432)

Pullman's description of the Authority is anticlimactic and difficult to digest. His prolonged suffering is painfully clear and in a subtle twist his free will has been taken away. He, the rumored creator of the universe, is, biologically, most like a flower tilting toward the sun for nourishment. Lyra and Will have both seen first-hand the suffering of the souls the Authority has imprisoned,

and they have become acquainted with the falsehoods he spread. And yet, they do not know who this aged creature is. They only know that he is suffering and that it would be right to set him free. God the Almighty is not taken down in an epic, cataclysmic battle between good or evil. Instead, he is free to return to dust.

Will and Lyra engage in a more purposeful liberation as well when they are in the Land of the Dead. After Lyra speaks with Roger and some of the other ghosts, she realizes that they are suffering intensely in this prison. They are fearful, confused, and slowly forgetting who they are. Using the subtle knife, Will and Lyra plan to cut an opening out of the Land of the Dead and set the ghosts free. After consulting the alethiometer, Lyra informs the ghosts of what will happen when they leave the Land of the Dead:

> "When you get out of here, all the particles that make you up will loosen and float apart, just like your dæmons did. If you've seen people dying, you know what that looks like. But your dæmons en't just *nothing* now; they're part of everything. All the atoms that were them, they've gone into the air and the wind and the trees and the earth and all the living things. They'll never vanish. They're just part of everything…You'll drift apart, it's true, but you'll be out in the open, part of everything alive again" (*TAS* 335)

Just as the Authority dissolved into the air, so will the material that makes up the ghosts he has imprisoned for thousands of years. Lyra encourages the hesitant ghosts by telling them that they will be part of the living world again as Dust, just as they were intended to be. They will become one with the air, the trees, and the living beings. Most importantly though, Lyra confirms that their atoms will be reunited with the atoms of their dæmons whom they were separated from at death. She reverses the Authority's unnatural severing of human and dæmon – not unlike the intercision Mrs. Coulter practiced at Bolvangar in *The Golden Compass*. Pullman examines the transcendence of the human body into an afterlife in both the death of God and the freeing of the souls in the Land of the Dead. Further, these moments establish the foundation for his ecological ethics.

Pullman's claims that God is a liar and a tyrant are more than attacks of an atheist on organized religion. Instead, they are a set of structured theses on a new ethics for citizens of his Republic of Heaven. God and the theocratic absolutism that Christianity perpetuates are framed as unethical. Conversely, proponents of ecological ethics act with the morality of a community in mind; they respect the physical world as their permanent home; and, in the afterlife, they return to that world as Dust. Notably, Pullman writes Roger, Lyra's beloved friend and victim of Asriel's ambitions, as the first ghost to enter the Republic of Heaven. His familiar and endearing presence is both Lyra's and the reader's first exposure to the consequences of ecological ethics. Pullman writes:

> The first ghost to leave the world of the dead was Roger. He took a step forward, and turned to look back at Lyra, and laughed in surprise as he found himself turning into the night, the starlight, the air…and then he was gone, leaving behind such a vivid little burst of happiness that Will was reminded of the bubbles in a glass of champagne.
>
> The other ghosts followed him, and Will and Lyra fell exhausted on the dew-laden grass, every nerve in their bodies blessing the sweetness of the good soil, the night air, the stars (*TAS* 382)

Roger's surprise and his "burst of happiness" characterize the transcendence of the soul as a blissful, exciting experience (*TAS* 382). Will's and Lyra's efforts and determination result in success. As Pullman insists, their choice "*makes a difference*" ("The Republic of Heaven 662). What is more, Pullman concludes the moment with Will and Lyra falling to the earth in appreciation of its beauty and comforts. The natural world is their reward for ecologically ethical practice.

2.5 Eden Again

Pullman invents an intricate, complex multiverse in *His Dark Materials*. Though the death of God is included in the trilogy, Pullman is not telling a story about the death of God, but of the rediscovery of Eden. According to Genesis and its different versions in a multitude of other worlds, Adam and Eve were made in the Garden of Eden and were subsequently cast out of the earthly paradise after eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. In Pullman's estimation, Adam and Eve were unjustly punished for their pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. In *Dæmon Voices*, he says:

> I think we should be celebrating Eve, not deploring her. What I was trying to do in my trilogy *His Dark Materials* was roughly that: to tell the story form a different moral angle, as it were – to tell a story in which Eve was the heroine and to show a way in which it was possible to see that the knowledge that we gained as a result of Eve's curiosity – and of the generous, wise and selfless behavior of the serpent, which risked the anger of God by passing on what it knew – was the beginning of all human wisdom (302-3)

The Eve of *His Dark Materials* is our beloved heroine Lyra, the serpent our curious scientist Dr. Mary Malone. In order to make his retelling convincing and truthful, Pullman introduces two essential variables: dæmons and Dust. The driving force behind Pullman's narrative is an investigation into these two entities. They linger in each moment, mysterious and untouchable. Pullman defines the dæmon as "an aspect of your self which has a physical existence outside you, in the form of an animal. Your dæmon is often, but not always, of the opposite sex to you, to your body; and when you're a child, it can change shape" (*Dæmon Voices* 26)[32]. Dust is self-consciousness, original sin, self-awareness, particles of the soul which linger after death, dark matter, wisdom, and Rusakov particles. Dust is attracted to consciousness or matter that is

[32] Though I do not have space to discuss this at length, I would like to acknowledge that Pullman's definition of the dæmon favors the gender binary and thus excludes transgender individuals.

conscious and is particularly attracted to humans who have surpassed the state of childlike innocence known as puberty. All beings in the universe – even the "Almighty" Authority – are made of Dust and shall return to Dust after escaping the Land of the Dead. It would be doing Pullman's trilogy a disservice to simply attempt a definition of dæmons or Dust. Dæmons serve a variety of functions in Pullman's literature and Dust has an infinite pool of possible definitions. Instead, I would like to explore the connection between Dust and dæmons and to argue that they as a pair are the key to Pullman's adaptation of Byron's embodied morality: ecological ethics.

Pullman often reveals tenets of his ecological ethics through non-human characters. Specifically, Iorek Byrnison remains a beacon of ecological wisdom for Lyra and readers to return to for clarity. At the beginning of *The Amber Spyglass*, Iorek finds the corpse of his beloved friend Lee Scoresby, who gave his life defending Will's father John Parry. In an unsettling yet moving moment, Iorek consumes the body of his friend: "And because the Texan aeronaut was one of the very few humans Iorek had ever esteemed, he accepted the man's last gift to him. With deft movements of his claws, he ripped aside the dead man's clothes, opened the body with one slash, and began to feast on the flesh and blood of his old friend. It was his first meal in days, and he was hungry" (*TAS* 44). Iorek considers the body of his friend a gift. It satiates his hunger[33] and gives him the energy to move forward in his fight to help his kingdom and Lyra. On the surface, Iorek's consumption of Lee's body appears cannibalistic, even though Iorek is not human, because he speaks and emotes as a human would. Interestingly though, Iorek accepts the gift precisely because Lee was a close personal friend whom he respected. The matter that was once Lee's body is no longer conscious. Hester, Lee's rabbit dæmon, has disappeared and his consciousness has been

[33] Pullman often writes detailed scenes of Iorek consuming seals and other non-human animals. I would like to note, however, that Iorek's consumption is never wasteful and is always associated with nourishment. Thus, the act of eating is connoted with the natural when it is respectful of Nature and the ecosystem, rather than gluttonous.

imprisoned in the Land of the Dead, where it will soon meet again with Lyra. The conscious matter that made up Lee Scoresby is no longer confined in his body. However, the matter can still sustain other life. Lee's body nourishes Iorek and the soul in a similar process to Dust nourishing the human soul.

In an essay on William Blake, Pullman considers the possibility of matter and spirit comprising the nature of the world. He concludes that "Unless we deny that consciousness exists at all, it seems that we have to believe either in a thing called 'spirit' that does the consciousness, or that consciousness somehow emerges when matter reaches the sort of complexity we find in the human brain" (*Dæmon Voices* 319). Human consciousness is inherently connected with dæmons. For example, Lee Scoresby's dæmon, as all dæmons, disappears upon the death of her human counterpart. Lee's consciousness, or his spirit depending on your preference, is in part connected to Hester, but not entirely dependent upon her – after all, part of Lee's soul is transferred to the Land of the Dead where Hester cannot exist. At the same time, his consciousness is not confined to his corporeal form, which acts as a cocoon shed by a butterfly after Lee's death. Therefore, the relationship Pullman establishes between consciousness and matter is dependent on two components of the spirit or soul – one which is manifest in Hester and one which is part of Lee – both of which are unrelated to the physical matter which gives Lee corporeal form. However, in addition, there is a third component that bridges the conscious being and the natural world. In other words, the sentient being[34] in Pullman's universe, is made up of at least three parts – the body, the spirit which enables consciousness, and their *nature*, whether that is a physical or an invisible entity depends on the world. Pullman writes the dæmon into his trilogy as physical evidence of individual human nature and a reminder that the human is part of all non-human life, despite the

[34] Pullman is, undoubtedly, a sentientist as well as a materialist.

anthropocentric tendency to assume otherwise. It is common knowledge in Lyra's world, for instance, that "when your dæmon settles, you'll know the sort of person you are" (*TGC* 167). The dæmon is evidence of your nature, your identity, in essence it is what makes you an individual. Pullman extends this a step further, however, by creating a dæmon that represents both a person's individual nature *and* their connection to Nature. It is essential that both these notions be intertwined for ecological ethics to work. What is more, Pullman cites dæmons as the catalyst behind the ideological rebellion that eventually transforms into a construction of the Republic of Heaven. In *The Amber Spyglass* when Will, Lyra, and the Gallivespians are in the Land of the Dead, Tialys posits that "'Maybe the people in Lyra's world are the only living beings to know they have [dæmons]. Maybe that's why it was one of them who started the revolt'" (*TAS* 318). In this moment, Pullman suggests that, because people in Lyra's world can see, love, and interact with their own nature, the act of being ripped from that part of their self for eternity was so unbearable that it motivated Asriel's revolution. Dæmons, therefore, are essential to accessing an ecological ethics.

The second major revision Pullman includes in *His Dark Materials* is Dust. Though Dust is difficult to see and even more difficult to define, people across all of Pullman's worlds investigate Dust at length. Each of these investigations intersect at various points until, in the final novel, Pullman introduces the mulefa. Mary Malone befriends the mulefa on her journey to play the role of serpent and, after learning their language and immersing herself in their culture, she works with them to uncover the mysteries of the universe. Throughout the trilogy, Pullman continues to mark the origin of consciousness 30,000 years before the trilogy takes place. Lyra observes tools in the Oxford museum that the alethiometer claims were created 30,000 years ago. Will and Lyra eventually learn that the subtle knife was made in Cittàgazze 30,000 years ago.

Finally, when Mary Malone questions her mulefa friend, Atal, about her species she confirms that their history dates back 30,000 years. This historical event marks "the great change in human history" often retold as the story of Adam and Eve (*TAS* 235). It marks the beginning of consciousness, and Dust's attraction to that consciousness, and the dawn of a cooperative, healthy ecosystem.

The mulefa world is a prime example of the healthy ecosystem at work. By way of example, in the mulefa world, the Dust "fertilizes [the tree flowers] like pollen from the stars" and when those trees shed their seed pods, the mulefa adapt them into wheels which eventually break open and are re-planted to grow more trees (*TAS* 289). The mulefa work together with their environment and form a community based on respect and mutual benefit. Even the anatomy of the mulefa people favors a cooperation between members of their species; each mulefa has an elephant-like trunk and they often work in pairs to build different items. Their world is a shining example of Pullman's school of morals where meaning and purpose are "arrived at by experience and by imaginative sympathy" (*Dæmon Voices* 389). Moreover, it is a world left untouched by theocratic absolutism and deceit as is made clear in the mulefa lore. Atal shares the story of the arrival of consciousness in their world with Mary:

> *Ever since we have had the sraf, we have had memory and wakefulness. Before that, we knew nothing.*
>
> *What happened to give you the sraf?*
>
> *We discovered how to use the wheels. One day a creature with no name discovered a seed-pod and began to play, and as she played she –*
>
> *She?*
>
> *She, yes. She had no name before then. She saw a snake coiling itself through the hole in the seed-pod…So the snake said Put your foot through the hole in the seed-pod where I was playing, and you will become wise. So she put a foot in where the snake had been. And the oil entered her foot and made her see more clearly than before, and the first thing she saw was the sraf. It was so strange and pleasant that she wanted to share it at once with all her kindred. So she and her mate took the first ones, and they discovered that they knew who they were* (*TAS* 236-7)

Pullman's first revision of Genesis read by Asriel in *The Golden Compass* includes only the addition of dæmons and primarily functions as a tool for voicing Lyra's curiosities about the universe and doubts about the Magisterium. His second revision, however, foregrounds the importance of Dust and tells the story of Adam and Eve as Pullman himself reads it. First, all evidence of a God or another authority is absent. The serpent in the story is a benevolent creature which shares its wisdom with the young and curious mulefa. The female mulefa in the story is then rewarded for her curiosity with the gift of consciousness, memory, and wakefulness. She is generous and shares her knowledge with her mate and her kin. As a result, the mulefa people are born and their history begins.

The mulefa world is special precisely because it is the only timeline, according to Pullman, in which the first sentient beings are not punished for their curiosity and experience. They are never cast out of Eden, and, therefore, the mulefa world *is* Eden. It is the world that the Land of the Dead opens into and where all of the souls will mingle as atoms of Dust. Additionally, this world is the birthplace of the Republic of Heaven; where Will and Lyra save the world, sacrifice their love, and vow to build the Republic in their own worlds. Pullman argues that, in order to create a Republic of Heaven, we must realize that "we have a connection with nature and the universe around us, with everything that is *not* human as well" ("The Republic of Heaven" 664). The mulefa world demonstrates this vital reality perfectly from its lore to its culture. Consequently, it is in that world where Will and Lyra learn what the Republic is and the ecological practice it will require to maintain it. While wandering through the mulefa world searching for their dæmons, Will and Lyra share their first kiss and proclaim their love for each other. Their pure joy and bliss in this experience attracts a shower of Dust and redirects its flow back into the living world and away from the abyss. When Mary Malone sees the pair return that night, she reflects that, if she

viewed them through the amber spyglass, "they would seem to be made of living gold. They would seem the true image of what human beings could be, once they had come into their inheritance. The Dust pouring down from the stars had found a living home again, and these children-no-longer-children, saturated with love, were the cause of it all" (*TAS* 497). Their act of love preserves the eternal home of consciousness and life: the physical world.

In the final chapters of *The Amber Spyglass*, Will and Lyra, moments after becoming citizens in the Republic of Heaven, learn that it is already under threat. Unbeknownst to them, Dust is leaking out of the universe through the windows that are left open while Spectres are feeding on the consciousness that remains. In order to preserve the Republic, they must close every window and be separated in their respective worlds until death. Will and Lyra are both in anguish after realizing they must sacrifice their love to do what is right. After all, as Pullman stresses, "what happens [in the Republic of Heaven] *matters*" ("The Republic of Heaven" 662). It is a heartbreaking reality, but Lyra uses the knowledge she has gained to give them both courage and hope for a future together in the natural world:

> "I'll be looking for you, Will, every moment, every single moment. And when we do find each other again we'll cling together so tight that nothing and no one'll ever tear us apart. Every atom of me and every atom of you…We'll live in birds and flowers and dragonflies and pine trees and in clouds and in those little specks of light you see floating in sunbeams…And when they use our atoms to make new lives, they won't just be able to take *one*, they'll have to take two, one of you and one of me, we'll be joined so tight" (*TAS* 526)

Lyra looks forward to their return to Nature and to one another. Because of their journey and their sacrifices, they will have a future together among the life of the mulefa world. Their eternity belongs in that earthly paradise, the mulefa world, in Eden again; but, at present, their concern is the Republic of Heaven.

3.0 Conclusion

In his lecture titled "God and Dust," Pullman explains that "The Republic of Heaven is a metaphor for a state of being that's already partly present wherever human beings are treating each other with kindness and approaching the universe with curiosity and wonder" (*Dæmon Voices* 407). Even though *His Dark Materials* takes place in a fantastical multiverse, Pullman's realist position is revealed ultimately in his belief that the Republic of Heaven can exist in all worlds, especially in the real world. In fact, as he argues in "God and Dust," there are pockets of our world where the Republic can be found among those individuals who engage in ecological practice. Likewise, though Byron's epic poems and plays are fantastical in their own right, there is always fact to be found in his fiction. Pullman and Byron read their world through the act of storytelling and in their revisions carve a path toward a world post-theocracy and post-authority. In that space, actions matter, and people are encouraged to choose kindness and community with all life. Furthermore, their heroes and heroines teach readers to actively read their "universe with curiosity and wonder" (*Dæmon Voices* 407). In doing so, one can become a citizen of the Republic of Heaven in this life, which Pullman and Byron believe is the only life.

By studying Byron and Pullman in conversation, we can access a more complete image of the work each author contributes individually to philosophies about the human soul and spirituality outside the Christian tradition, but derived from in rejection of the Christian tradition. What is more, the application of their philosophies in tandem is essential for addressing the reality of our world in the present. Embodied morality and its counterpart ecological ethics offer guidance for engaging with the world actively as though it is a text. In doing so, readers can identify anti-ecological and theocratic practices which build artificial hierarchies among sentient beings and

threaten consciousness and wisdom won for us by Adam and Eve. I encourage readers and scholars of literature alike to apply anti-racist, intersectional feminist, environmentalist, and post-human theories to the works of Byron and Pullman to bridge their philosophies with the real world where they are needed most. After all, what is literature if not a healthy balance of fact and fiction, fantasy and realism.

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